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Code Gems For Android Developers

Working with the World's Most Popular Mobile OS

By Avi Yehuda

WHAT IS ANDROID?

Android is a stack of operating system, middle ware and applications developed by Google that is dedicated to mobile devices. Android relies on Linux kernel 2.6 for core services.

The Android platform provides API and Tools to develop applications using Java Platform. It features Dalvik Virtual Machine, SQLite, an integrated browser, application framework, as well as various media and hardware

BASIC CONCEPTS

The following table outlines the key concepts in an Android application:

Concept	Description
Activity	Activity is the presenter of a single screen in the application. It has certain abilities, like displaying views, menus, alerts and notifications. It can also call another Activity, which means opening a new screen.
	Activity is a class that derives from an android.app.Activity. An application needs to have at least one Activity. All Activities must be declared in the manifest file.
View	A view is a single user interface element. It handles user events and draws the component on the screen.
	Views can contain other Views, these are called view groups. A View is a class that derives from android.view.View.
	There are already many existing views. The developer can use them or create his own customized view by extending any of them.
Intent	Intent is the negotiator between two activities or between two applications. It gives the ability to pass messages and data between the two entities.
	When writing applications for mobile, Intent gives access to OS services like opening the camera, a browser, displaying notifications and so on.
Service	A Service is an application that has the ability to run in the background without displaying any user interface.
	A Service is a class that derives from android.app.Service. All Services must be declared in the manifest file.

DEVELOPMENT

Installing SDK

Download and install the Android SDK http://developer.android.com/sdk/

Android Development Tools (ADT) Eclipse plugin

Download install and configure ADT for Eclipse.

http://developer.android.com/sdk/eclipse-adt.html

Creating a project with Eclipse

Select File > New > Android Project.

Enter Project Name. Press 'Next'

- Select Build Target according to the wanted SDK version. Press
- Enter Application name this is how the user sees the title of your application.
- Enter Package name Android demands each application to declare its root package.
- Create Activity + Activity name.
- Minimum SDK Version If you're unsure of the appropriate API Level to use, copy the API Level listed for the Build Target you selected in the Target tab.
- Click Finish.





You can also develop Android applications without Eclipse, but since we are developing in Java, Eclipse makes it easier to develop.

An Android Project Structure

Manifest file

AndroidManifest.xml defines the Android application. It contains the attributes, activities, versions, permissions, and other parameters of the application.





'src' folder

As with any Java project, this folder holds all Java source code and packages.

'res' folder

Contains local resources for the application:

- 'drawable' image folders according to resolutions. By default there are 3 folders for 3 basic resolutions.
- 'layout' xml files which represent display layout. By default a main.xml is created.
- 'values' xml files which define global constants, strings, styles or colors

SDK jar

Contains the android jar which is different across versions of the SDK.

'gen' folder

This folder contains the R class which is automatically generated by the Eclipse plugin and gives access to the project resources.

'assets' folder

This folder holds other raw resource files such as movie or sound files. By default, this folder is not created. These resources will not be modified.

Creating Android Virtual Device (AVD)

The developer can test his applications on his own device or on an emulator, which comes along with Android SDK.

But first the developer has to define a virtual device that suits his needs.

- · To create an AVD from Eclipse:
- Select Window > Android SDK and AVD Manager, or click the Android SDK and AVD Manager icon in the Eclipse toolbar.
- In the Virtual Devices panel, you'll see a list of existing AVDs. Click New to create a new AVD.
- · Fill in the details for the AVD and click "Create AVD".



Signing and generating jars

Android applications are zipped to jar files. The only difference is that Android jar files have a special extension - .apk.

All application jars have to be signed before they are installed.

For more instructions read

http://developer.android.com/guide/publishing/app-signing.html

USER INTERFACE

Android generates user interfaces either from XML or from Java code.

Views

Creating and adding a new View to a Layout in XML

```
<
```



View Groups

A ViewGroup is a special view that can contain other views.

List viev

```
ListView list = new ListView(this);
String[] listItems = {"Option 1","Option 2","Option 3"};
list.setAdapter(new ArrayAdapter<String>(this,
android.R.layout.simple_list_item_1, listItems));
list.setOnItemClickListener(new OnItemClickListener() {...
```



Layouts

A Layout is a type of GroupView. It holds views in a certain layout on the

Adding a Layout - XML example - adding to the layout XML

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<!nearLayout xwins:android=http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android
android:layout_width="fill_parent" android:layout_height="fill_parent"
android:orientation="vertical">
</linearLayout>
```

The layout xml is placed in ct_path>/res/layouts

Adding a Layout - Code example

This would be implemented in an Activity class

```
LinearLayout innerLayout = new LinearLayout(this);
innerLayout.setPadding(20,20,20,20);
innerLayout.setGravity(Gravity.CENTER);
outerLayout.addView(innerLayout );
```

Global Strings

A global string, or an array of strings, are declared in an external xml file in the resource folder:/res/values/strings.xml.

Declaring a global string

Using a global string while creating a TextView

```
<TextView
android:layout_width="fill_parent"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:text="@string/hello"
/>
```

Code usage

String hello = context.getString(R.string.hello);

Global String Array

Declaration in a Global String Array

Code usage

String[] planets = context.getResources().getStringArray(R.array.planets_array);

Menus

Options Menu

An Options menu is presented when the user presses the menu button while the Activity is active.



Step 1 - Creating the menu XML

The layout xml is placed in cpet_path/res/menu

Step 2 – Displaying the menu (implemented in Activity class)

```
@Override
public boolean onCreateOptionsMenu(Menu menu) {
   MenuInflater inflater = getMenuInflater();
   inflater.inflate(R.menu.game_menu, menu);
   return true;
}
```

Step 3 – Listening to user choice (implemented in Activity class)

```
@Override
public boolean onOptionsItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
    // Handle item selection
    switch (item.getItemId()) {
    case R.id.new_game:
        newGame();
        return true;
    case R.id.quit:
        quit();
        return true;
    default:
        return super.onOptionsItemSelected(item);
    }
}
```

Context Menu

A context menu is a floating list of menu items that appears when the user performs a long-press on a View.

Step 1 - Creating a menu XML

Step 2 – Showing the menu (implemented in Activity class)

Step 3 - Listening to user choice (implemented in Activity class)

```
@Override
public boolean onContextItemSelected(MenuItem item) {
   AdapterContextMenuInfo info = (AdapterContextMenuInfo) item.getMenuInfo();
   switch (item.getItemId()) {
   case R.id.edit:
   editNote(info.id);
   return true;
   case R.id.delete:
   deleteNote(info.id);
   return true;
   default:
   return super.onContextItemSelected(item);
  }
}
```

Step 4 – Attaching the context menu to a view (implemented in Activity class)

registerForContextMenu(findViewById(R.id.Button01));



Submenu

A submenu is a floating list of menu items that the user opens by pressing a menu item in the Options Menu or a context menu.

Alerts/Dialogs

Toast

A toast notification is a message that pops up on the surface of the window.

```
Toast waitToast = Toast.makeText(getApplicationContext(), "Please wait...",
Toast.LENGTH_LONG);
waitToast.setGravity(Gravity.TOP, 0, 0);
waitToast.show();
```



AlertDialog



Status-Bar Notifications

One way to notify an Android user is by displaying notifications in the status bar. You can show a message, play a sound, add an icon and more.

Creating a status bar notification

```
NotificationManager mNotificationManager = (NotificationManager)
getSystemService(Context.NOTIFICATION_SERVICE);
Notification notification = new Notification(R.drawable.icon, "Notification Test",
System.currentTimeMillis());
Context context = getApplicationContext();
CharSequence contentTitle = "My notification Title";
CharSequence contentTitle = "My notification Title";
CharSequence contentText = "This is the message";
Intent notificationIntent = new Intent(NotificationTest.this, NotificationTest.class);
//options
notification.sound = Uri.withAppendedPath(Audio.Media.INTERNAL_CONTENT_URI, "4"); //
sound
notification.vibrate = new long[]{0,100,200,300}; //vibrate

//auto cancel after select
notification.flags |= Notification.FLAG_AUTO_CANCEL;

PendingIntent contentIntent = PendingIntent.getActivity(NotificationTest.this, 0,
notification.setLatestEventInfo(context, contentTitle, contentText, contentIntent);
mNotificationManager.notify(1, notification);
```



Resource images

Resource images are placed under cproject_dir>/res/drawable

Using a resource image in an image view - XML example

```
<ImageView
   android:layout_width="wrap_content"
android:layout_height="wrap_content"
android:tint="#55ff0000"
android:src="@drawable/my_image_name"/>
```

Using a resource image in an image view - Code Exampl

 $\label{lem:continuous} (\mbox{(ImageView)}).setImageResource(R.drawable.my_image_name);$



Turning the resource image to a Bitmap object

 $\label{eq:bitmap} \begin{subarray}{ll} Bitmap & BitmapFactory.decodeResource(view.getResources(),R.drawable.my_image_name); \end{subarray}$

Drawing the bitmap on a canvas object

canvas.drawBitmap(bitmap, x, y, null);

Creating links using Linkify

Linkify is a class that lets you create links from TextViews. You can create links not just to web sites, but also to map addresses, emails and even phone numbers.

Creating web links

```
TextView myWebSite = (TextView) findViewById(R.id.my_web_site);
myWebSite.setText("http://http://www.dzone.com/");
Linkify.addLinks(myWebSite , Linkify.WEB_URLS);
```

Hot Tip

You can also create links to phone numbers, map locations or email addresses.

Using a regular expression for filtering strings

```
TextView myCustomLink = new TextView(this);
Pattern pattern = Pattern.compile("[a-zA-Z]+&");
myCustomLink.setText("press Linkify& or on Android& to search it on
google");
Linkify.addLinks(myCustomLink,pattern, "http://www.google.ie/search?q=");
mainLayout.addView(myCustomLink);
```

SYSTEM APIs

Using multithreading for background jobs

Regular Thread

Thread With Handler for UI operations

A new thread cannot update the user interface, so you need to use a handler. The Handler is the middleman between a new thread and the UI message queue.

Using AsyncTask

An AsyncTask is a thread that can handle user interface operations.

Hot Tip

AsyncTask defines 3 generic types:

AsyncTask<{type of the input}, {type of the update unit}, {type of the result}>. You don't have to use all of them – simply use 'Void' for any of them.

Using a Timer to schedule jobs

A Timer is a comfortable way to dispatch a thread in the future, be it once or more.

```
TimerTask timerTask = new TimerTask() {
    @Override
        public void run() { doSomething(); }
};

Timer timer = new Timer();
timer.schedule(timerTask, 2000,2000);
```

Opening a new screen

Each screen is a different Activity class. You have to declare each activity in the manifest file.

Opening a new activity

```
Intent in = new Intent(myactivity.this, MyActivity2.class);
in.putExtra("myKey", "new1"); //passing a parameter
startActivity(in);
```

Receiving a parameter from the original activity

```
String s= getIntent().getExtras().get("myKey").toString()
```

Going back from the new activity to the original activity

finish();

Open a new Activity to get the result

```
Intent in = new Intent(myactivity.this, MyActivity2.class); startActivityForResult(in, \theta);
```

Returning a result to the original activity

```
Intent in = getIntent();
in.putExtra("result", "some parameter");
setResult(RESULT_OK,in);
finish();
```

Getting the result from the new activity after it finishes

```
@Override protected void onActivityResult(int requestCode, int resultCode, Intent data) \dots
```

Network

Opening a browser using intent

```
startActivity(new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW, Uri.parse("http://www.dzone.com")));
```

Enabling Internet permission in the manifest file

```
<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.INTERNET" />
```

Reading HTTP using Apache HttpClient

Reading a TCP packet using a Socket

```
Socket requestSocket = new Socket("remote.servername.com", 13);
InputStreamReader isr = new InputStreamReader(requestSocket.getInputStream(),
"ISO-8859-1");
white ((this.ch = isr.read()) != -1) {
    myStringBuffer.append((char) this.ch);
}
```

Embedding a browser inside your application

```
WebView webView = ((WebView)findViewById(R.id.webview));
webView.getSettings().setJavaScriptEnabled(true);
webView.getSettings().setPluginsEnabled(true); //plugins/flash
webView.loadUrl(url);
```



Loading your own html to the embedded browser

webView.loadData(htmlString, "text/html", "utf-8");

Using the system email client

Media (audio, video)

Using the media player to play local media files

MediaPlayer mp = MediaPlayer.create(context, R.raw.sound_file_1);
mp.start();

Hot Tip

The media files are placed under res/raw.

Playing a media file from a path

```
MediaPlayer mp = new MediaPlayer();
mp.setDataSource("http://www.somepath.com/file.mp3");
mp.prepare();
mp.start();
```

Opening the system media player using intent

```
Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW);
intent.setDataAndType(Uri.parse( "http://somepath.com/video.mp4" ),"video/
mp4");
startActivity(intent);
```

Displaying video inside your application with VideoView

```
getWindow().setFormat(PixelFormat.TRANSLUCENT);
VideoView videoHolder = (VideoView) findViewById(R.id.VideoView01);
videoHolder.setMediaController(new MediaController(this));
videoHolder.setVideoURI(Uri.parse(path+"/"+fileName));
videoHolder.requestFocus();
videoHolder.start();
```

Storage

Storing in shared preferences

Share preferences are a simple key-value storage mechanism of primitive types and Strings. These values are stored even if the program is terminated.

```
// Restore preferences
SharedPreferences settings =
PreferenceManager.getDefaultSharedPreferences(context)
boolean booleanParam = settings.getBoolean("booleanParam", false);

// Change preferences
SharedPreferences.Editor editor = settings.edit();
editor.putBoolean("booleanParam", true);
editor.commit();
```

Storing internally

Reading

Writing

```
FileOutputStream fop = openFileOutput("my_file", Context.MODE_PRIVATE); fop.write("Data to be written".getBytes()); fop.flush(); fop.close();
```

Storing on the SD card

 $\label{eq:file_path} \mbox{\tt File} \ \ \mbox{\tt path} \ = \ \mbox{\tt Environment.getExternalStorageDirectory();}$

SQLite

Android has a built-in SQLite DB that you can use.

Creating a DB table

Executing SQL code

```
db.execSQL( "create table ..." );
```

Inserting Data

getWritableDatabase().insert(tableName, null, values);

Getting Data

getReadableDatabase().query(...);

Camera

Permission in manifest file

<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CAMERA"></uses-permission>

Launching the Camera using an intent

Embedding a camera in your application

Step 1 - Preview - extending a surface view

```
class Preview extends SurfaceView implements SurfaceHolder.Callback{
    SurfaceHolder mHolder;
    Camera mCamera;

Preview(Context context) {
        super(context);

        mHolder = getHolder();
        mHolder.addCallback(this);
        mHolder.setType(SurfaceHolder.SURFACE_TYPE_PUSH_BUFFERS);
    }

    public void surfaceCreated(SurfaceHolder holder) {
        mCamera = Camera.open();
        mCamera.setPreviewDisplay(holder);
    }

    public void surfaceDestroyed(SurfaceHolder holder) {
        mCamera.stopPreview();
        mCamera.release();
    }

    public void surfaceChanged(SurfaceHolder holder, int format, int w, int h) {
        mCamera.startPreview();
        mCamera.startPreview();
    }
}
```

Step 2 - Taking pictures

Contacts

Permission in manifest



The camera needs to be in preview mode while taking a picture otherwise the action will fail.

Executing the contacts application using intent

Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW);
intent.setData(Uri.parse("content://contacts/people/"));
startActivity(intent);

Using intent to display a contact with id

Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW);
intent.setData(Uri.parse("content://contacts/people/"+id));
startActivity(intent);

Phone calls

Permission in manifest

<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.CALL_PHONE"></uses-permission>



Execute a phone call

Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_CALL);
intent.setData(Uri.parse("tel:+436641234567"));
startActivity(intent);

Call a contact

Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_CALL); intent.setData(Uri.parse("content://contacts/people/"+contact_id)); startActivity(intent);

Display the dialer with a number

Intent intent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_DIAL);
intent.setData(Uri.parse("tel:+436641234567"));
startActivity(intent);

SMS, MMS

Permission in manifest file

<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.SEND_SMS">
 </uses-permission>

Open SMS application

Intent sendIntent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_VIEW);
sendIntent.putExtra("sms_body", "Content of the SMS goes here...");
sendIntent.setType("vnd.android-dir/mms-sms");
startActivity(sendIntent);

Open MMS application

Intent sendIntent = new Intent(Intent.ACTION_SEND);
sendIntent.putExtra("sms_body", "additional text"); //attaching an image
File img = new File("/sdcard/a.png");
sendIntent.putExtra(Intent.EXTRA_STREAM, Uri.fromFile(img));
sendIntent.setType("image/png");
startActivity(sendIntent);

Send SMS from your code

Geo-location

Required permission in manifest file

<uses-permission android:name="android.permission.ACCESS_FINE_LOCATION" />

Listening to user location updates

Location updates are received from GPS, Network or Passive (other applications' data).

```
LocationManager locationManager =
    (LocationManager) context.getSystemService(LOCATION_SERVICE);
LocationListener myLocationListener = new LocationListener() {
};···
LocationManager.requestLocationUpdates(
LocationManager.GPS_PROVIDER, 0, 0, myLocationListener);
locationManager.requestLocationUpdates(
LocationManager.PASSIVE_PROVIDER, 0, 0, myLocationListener);
```

Fetching Screen Properties

```
Display display = getWindowManager().getDefaultDisplay();
int screenHeight = display.getHeight();
int screenWidth = display.getWidth();
int orientation = getResources().getConfiguration().orientation;
if (orientation == Configuration.ORIENTATION_PORTRAIT) {
   // portrait
} else if (orientation == Configuration.ORIENTATION_LANDSCAPE) {
```

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Avi Yehuda is a long time Java and Web developer. His experience varies from pure server-side Java to Client technologies like JavaScript. Avi defines himself as a developer with a passion for Java related technologies. Lately his focus revolves around developing

applications for the Android OS. Visit Avi's blog for more details http://www.aviyehuda.com.

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