

# Introduction to Kotlin

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## Abstract

This paper introduces Kotlin, a statically typed, object-oriented programming language designed to be fully interoperable with Java and the Java Virtual Machine (JVM). It focuses on Kotlin's concise syntax, advanced features such as null safety, and extensive multiplatform development capability. These features make Kotlin a modern and powerful programming language.

## 1 Introduction

Kotlin is a modern programming language developed by JetBrains, a renowned software development company. Designed as a safer and more concise alternative to Java, Kotlin offers full interoperability with Java, allowing developers to leverage existing Java libraries and frameworks while benefiting from Kotlin's modern features. Its clean and expressive syntax has made it increasingly popular, particularly in Android development. In fact, Google announced Kotlin as its preferred language for Android app development in 2019 [4]. Beyond Android, Kotlin supports multiplatform development, enabling developers to build applications for the server, desktop, web, and iOS from a shared codebase [23]. This paper presents an overview of Kotlin's concise syntax and highlights key language features that illustrate its advantages over Java. It assumes a basic understanding of Java and begins by examining core syntactic differences between Kotlin and Java, followed by an introduction to concepts such as null safety and seamless Java interoperability. The paper concludes with a discussion of Kotlin's multiplatform capabilities, with particular emphasis on its application in Android development.

## 2 Basic Syntax

This section covers the basic syntax of Kotlin and highlights its differences compared to Java. The goal is to provide a concise overview focused on the most important distinctions.

## 2.1 Program Entry Point and Method Declaration

The *main* method is the entry point of any Java or Kotlin program [9]. Java enforces object-oriented programming, thus requiring the *main* method to be declared within a class. For the *main* method to be directly executable, it must be *public* and *static*,<sup>1</sup> as shown below:

Java main method

```
1 public class Main {  
2     public static void main(String[] args) {  
3         System.out.println("Hello, World!");  
4     }  
5 }
```

Kotlin, on the other hand, does not require methods to be declared inside a class, allowing for a more functional programming style with top-level functions. These top-level functions can be called directly without the need to instantiate a class [21], functioning similarly to static methods in Java,<sup>2</sup> but without an explicit class affiliation. Kotlin further reduces boilerplate by having *public* as the default visibility [44] and allowing the *main* method to omit arguments passed as an array [9]. Also, semicolons are optional, and Kotlin introduces the *fun* keyword for defining functions [10], resulting in a concise and readable syntax, as shown here:

Kotlin main method

```
1 fun main() {  
2     println("Hello, World!")  
3 }
```

## 2.2 Variable Declaration

Variables in Kotlin are declared using the keyword *val* for immutable variables or *var* for mutable variables [11], similar to Java's *final* and non-final variables. The type is declared after the variable name, separated by a colon:

Java data types

```
1 final String name = "JohnDoe";  
2 int age = 42;
```

Kotlin data types

```
1 val name: String = "JohnDoe"  
2 var age: Int = 42
```

## 2.3 Type Inference

Kotlin supports type inference, allowing the compiler to infer a variable's type based on its initializer or usage [3]. Unlike many functional programming languages such as Haskell,

<sup>1</sup>If the *main* method were non-static, it would require an instance of the class before it could be run, leading to a circular dependency.

<sup>2</sup>When compiling Kotlin to Java bytecode, top-level functions are compiled as static methods in a class named after the file.

which rely on unification for type inference, Kotlin uses a different approach called constraint solving [2]. This approach allows for type inference with subtyping. However, a detailed discussion of its internal workings is out of scope for this paper.

```
1 val name = "John_Doe" // type is inferred as String
2 var age = 42 // type is inferred as Int
```

## 2.4 Return Type Declaration

Similar to variable declaration, a method's return type is declared after the method name and parameters, separated by a colon [10]. The equivalent of *void* in Java is *Unit* in Kotlin [1, 25], which can be omitted if no value is returned.

Java method declaration

```
1 public int add(int a, int b) {
2     return a + b;
3 }
```

Kotlin method declaration

```
1 fun add(a: Int, b: Int): Int {
2     return a + b
3 }
```

## 2.5 Everything is an Object

In Kotlin, there are no primitive types.<sup>3</sup> All types are objects and inherit from the *Any* class [12]. This approach creates a more consistent object-oriented programming model and eliminates the need for wrapper classes.

Java Integer Wrapper

```
1 Integer.valueOf(42).hashCode();
```

Kotlin direct usage of Int

```
1 42.hashCode()
```

Furthermore, functions in Kotlin are also treated as objects [27], enabling higher-order functions and functional programming paradigms. As a result, functions can be passed as arguments, returned from other functions, and assigned to variables.

## 3 Classes

In both Java and Kotlin, classes are declared using the *class* keyword [17] and can contain attributes, methods, and constructors. In the example below, we declare a class to represent a salesperson:

Java Class Declaration

```
1 public class SalesPerson {
2     private final String name;
```

<sup>3</sup>Certain types may be optimized to use Java primitives at runtime for performance reasons.

```

3 private final int commissionRate;
4 private double salesVolume;
5
6 public SalesPerson(String name, int commissionRate, double
7     transferAmount) {
8     this.name = name;
9     this.commissionRate = commissionRate;
10    this.salesVolume = transferAmount;
11 }

```

Kotlin improves upon Java by allowing the constructor to be declared directly within the class definition [18]. As a reminder, the default visibility in Kotlin is *public*, and classes are also *final* by default, meaning they cannot be inherited from unless explicitly declared *open*. Kotlin also permits the declaration of constructor parameters (as properties) using *val* or *var*, including visibility modifiers [18], resembling the concise syntax found in Java records:

#### Kotlin Class Declaration

```

1 class SalesPerson(val name: String, private val commissionRate:
2     Int, transferAmount: Double = 0.0) {
3     var salesVolume: Double = transferAmount
4 }

```

In this example, *name* and *commissionRate* become properties of the class, while *transferAmount* is a constructor parameter used to initialize *salesVolume*. It is still possible to declare attributes outside the constructor. Additionally, Kotlin allows default parameter values in constructors and functions, a feature that would otherwise require method overloading in Java.

### 3.1 Properties

Properties in Kotlin facilitate concise declaration of getters and setters, including their visibility, directly beside the corresponding attribute [38, 39]. Unlike Java, accessing a property in Kotlin via dot notation will internally call the corresponding getter or setter method, ensuring a consistent syntax. If only the visibility needs to be restricted, the property can be declared as shown below:

#### Private setter

```

1 var salesVolume: Double = transferAmount
2     private set

```

For more complex logic, custom getters and setters can be defined inline [39]. The *field* keyword refers to the underlying attribute:

#### Custom accessors

```

1 var salesVolume: Double = transferAmount
2     private set(value) {
3         if (value < 0)
4             throw IllegalArgumentException("SV must be positive")
5         field = value
6     }

```

Kotlin also supports computed properties, which do not store a value but compute it on access via a custom getter [39]. This approach mirrors writing a getter method in Java without a backing field:

#### Computed Property

```
1 val commission: Double
2     get() = salesVolume * commissionRate
```

## 4 String Interpolation

In Java, variables are typically formatted into strings using the *String.format()* method or by concatenation with the `+` operator. Kotlin introduces a more readable mechanism called string interpolation [43], allowing variables and expressions to be directly embedded within a string by prefixing them with a `$` sign, and enclosing expressions in curly braces:

#### String Interpolation

```
1 fun printSalesPerson() {
2     println("Name: $name, Sales in USD: ${salesVolume * 1.2}")
3 }
```

## 5 Null Safety

Whenever a method or attribute is accessed on a null reference in Java, a `NullPointerException` (NPE) is thrown. Kotlin eliminates this risk with a null safety system that distinguishes between nullable and non-nullable types [31, 36]. By default, all types in Kotlin are non-nullable, meaning variables cannot hold a null value unless explicitly declared with a question mark: Kotlin enforces this distinction at compile time, requiring developers to handle nullable types explicitly. At runtime, both types are treated the same.

```
1 var a: String = "a is non-nullable"
2 var b: String? = "b is nullable"
```

### 5.1 Null Safety Operators

When working with nullable types, you cannot directly access properties or methods, because the reference could be `null`, potentially causing an NPE. In Java, this is typically handled with an if check, as shown in the following example:

```
1 private final SalesPerson supervisor;
2
3 public void printSupervisor() {
4     if (supervisor == null) System.out.println("null");
5     else System.out.println(supervisor.name);
6 }
```

This approach is also available in Kotlin, where checking for a null value in an if statement automatically casts the type to a non-nullable type within the scope of the statement [16].<sup>4</sup> However, Kotlin provides convenient shortcuts for handling nullable types by using Null safety operators.

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<sup>4</sup>This feature is known as smart casting, where the compiler automatically casts the variable to a more specific type when it can guarantee the safety of the cast.

### 5.1.1 Safe Call Operator

The safe call operator `?.` allows you to access properties or methods of an object only if it is non-null, thereby reducing the need for explicit null checks [40]. If the object is `null`, the expression safely evaluates to `null`, avoiding an NPE. Otherwise, it evaluates as expected, granting access to the object's attributes or methods. Essentially, this operator enhances the standard dot notation by incorporating null safety.

```
1 val supervisor: SalesPerson? = null
2 fun printSupervisor() {
3     println(supervisor?.name)
4 }
```

Multiple safe calls can be chained [40], and if any segment is `null`, the entire chain evaluates to `null`. Furthermore, Safe calls can also be used on the left side of an assignment. If the safe call operator evaluates to `null`, the assignment will be skipped.

```
1 // Chained safe call operators
2 var volume: Double? = supervisor?.supervisor?.salesVolume
3 // Assignment with a chained operator
4 supervisor?.supervisor?.salesVolume = 0.0
```

### 5.1.2 Elvis Operator

The Elvis operator `?:` is an enhanced version of the safe call operator, offering a more concise way to handle `null` values. If the expression on the left side evaluates to `null`, it returns a default value specified to the right side of `?:` [19]:

```
1 fun printSupervisor() {
2     println(supervisor?.name ?: "No supervisor")
3 }
```

When compiling to Java, both the safe call operator and the Elvis operator are treated by the compiler as if statements. These operators simply make the code significantly shorter and easier to read, therefore increasing the maintainability as well.

### 5.1.3 Not-Null Assertion Operator

The not-null assertion operator `!!` converts a nullable type to a non-nullable type, instructing the compiler to treat the value as non-null [29]. However, if the value is actually `null`, a `NullPointerException` will be thrown. This operator contradicts the concept of null safety and should only be used when the programmer is certain that the value cannot be `null`, but the compiler is unable to guarantee it.

Usage of the not-null assertion

```
1 var possiblyNull: String? = null
2 var b: String = possiblyNull!!
```

## 5.2 Nullable Receiver

We have already covered extension functions in the chapter on Classes. As a brief reminder, extension functions are external additions to a class that introduce new methods, which can be called on an instance of the class using dot notation.

Since extension functions are not actually part of the class itself but merely an extension that can be called using dot notation, it is possible for the object to be null while still being able to call the extension method [35]. To achieve this, the function must have a so-called *nullable receiver* type, which is indicated by a question mark after the class the extension function is defined for. As a result, the method remains accessible even if the object is null. This allows values of a nullable type to be accessed without checking for null beforehand, as the null case is handled within the method itself. The following example demonstrates how to define and properly use an extension function with a nullable receiver type.

#### Usage of an extension function

```
1 // define the extension function
2 fun SalesPeron?.print() {
3     if (this == null) return println("This person dose not exist.")
4     return println("$name: $salesVolume sold")
5 }
6 // use the extension function
7 var sales: SalesPeron? = null
8 sales.print() // This person dose not exist.
9 sales = SalesPeron("Carl", 1200)
10 sales.print() // Carl: 0.0 sold
```

## 6 Interoperability

This chapter focuses on interoperability between Java and Kotlin. In this context, interoperability refers to the seamless compatibility between the two languages. Kotlin was designed to integrate smoothly with Java code and vice versa, making it easy to use both within the same project.

### 6.1 Call Java in Kotlin

Everything written in Java is accessible in Kotlin [14], making interoperability especially useful when working with Java libraries. There are already countless libraries written in Java that can now be used in Kotlin, eliminating the need to rewrite a library with the same functionality specifically for Kotlin. This applies to both the official Java standard libraries and more specialized external libraries. Additionally, interoperability makes it much easier to migrate existing Java projects to Kotlin, as they do not need to be completely rewritten. This once again shows that Kotlin is a well-thought-out language designed to serve as an improvement over Java.

#### 6.1.1 Create and access objects

To illustrate how Java code can be accessed in a Kotlin project, the following example features a Salesman class that stores basic information using getters and setters.

#### Example Java class

```
1 public class Salesman {
2     private final String name;
3     private int salary;
4
5     public Salesman(String name, String title, int salary) {
6         this.name = name;
```

```

7     this.salary = salary;
8 }
9
10 public String getName() { return name; }
11 public int getSalary() { return salary; }
12 public void setSalary(int salary) { this.salary = salary; }
13 }

```

If we want to access this class, we can use the familiar Kotlin syntax [14] to instantiate the object and access its properties. There is no syntactical difference between accessing a Java class and a Kotlin class. Since there are no explicit getter and setter methods in Kotlin, Java methods following Java’s conventions for getters and setters are converted [8] into so-called synthetic properties [24]. These can be accessed using Kotlin’s property syntax. If the getters and setters do not follow Java conventions, they can still be accessed as regular methods.

#### Access a Salesman instance in Kotlin

```

1 var carl = Salesman("carl_mueller", 4500)
2 println(carl.name) // prints 'carl mueller'
3 carl.salary = 4600 // sets salary to 4600
4 carl.setSalary(4600) // alternitvly to the above

```

Kotlin detects that the name field in the Java class is final, therefore only a getter method will be created. If the field had only a setter, the method would not be converted into a synthetic property, as Kotlin does not support set-only properties [24].

### 6.1.2 Mapped types

By default, when instances of a Java class are used in Kotlin, they are loaded as Java objects. However, some Java types have a corresponding Kotlin counterpart, these objects are automatically mapped to their equivalent Kotlin counterpart [28]. For example, `java.lang.Integer` is converted to `kotlin.Int?` because Java wrapper objects can be null. This applies to all Java wrapper classes and some important types, such as `java.lang.Object`, which is mapped to `kotlin.Any!`<sup>5</sup>. However, all Java primitive types are mapped to their non-nullable Kotlin counterparts, as primitive types cannot be null in Java. For instance, Java’s `int` is converted to `kotlin.Int`. Additionally, collections like Lists, Maps and Arrays are also converted. For a complete list of all mapped types, consult the official documentation [28]. Java’s return type `void` is replaced by Kotlin’s `Unit` type.

### 6.1.3 Null safety with Java

Since Java does not distinguish between nullable and non-nullable types, any object returned from Java code can be null. This contradicts Kotlin’s strict null safety concept and would make working with Java objects impractical. To address this, Kotlin introduces *platform types* for objects created through Java code. If a Java type does not have a direct Kotlin equivalent, as is the case with most Java types, the compiler assigns it a platform type, which is non-denotable. [33]. This means we cannot explicitly declare or write this type as we do with nullable types using a question mark<sup>6</sup>. With platform types, Kotlin relaxes its strict null safety rules, making their handling similar to Java. However, this

<sup>5</sup>The exclamation mark indicates that this is a platform type. More on this in the next chapter.

<sup>6</sup>When the compiler needs to report a type-related error, it uses an exclamation mark to indicate the platform type [30].



increases the risk of `NullPointerException`s. To demonstrate how this can be used in practice, the previously introduced Java `Salesman` class has been extended with the following method:

```
1 public static List<Salesman> createList() {
2     List<Salesman> list = new ArrayList<>();
3     list.add(null);
4     list.add(new Salesman("Carl", 4200));
5     return list;
6 }
```

If we access this method through Kotlin, we get the `List` containing the two `Elements` created in Java. Since both objects are created in Java and could be null, they are assigned the platform type, thus the developer can decide if the variable should be nullable or non-nullable.

```
1 val list = Salesman.createList()
2 println(list::class.qualifiedName)
3 var item: Salesman = list[0]
4 var nullableItem: Salesman? = list[1]
5 println(item.name) // allowed but would throw NPE
```

If the type is set to non-nullable but the object is actually null, attempting to access its members will result in a `NullPointerException`, as shown above. Therefore, using nullable types is generally safer.

Some Java compilers use annotations [34] to specify whether a value is nullable or non-nullable, such as JetBrains' `@Nullable` or `@NotNull` annotation [6]. If these annotations are present in the Java code, the compiler assigns the corresponding nullable or non-nullable Kotlin type to the variable instead of a platform type. If we had a method returning a simple string with a `@NotNull` annotation in our `Salesman` class, the variable would actually assign the non-nullable type instead of the platform type:

```
1 public static @NotNull String getString() { return "Not_␣null"; }
```

```
1 val str: String = Salesman.getString() // non-nullable type
```

#### 6.1.4 Java arrays in Kotlin

In Java, arrays of primitive types can be used to achieve better performance, as they avoid the overhead associated with objects. Kotlin prohibits the direct use of primitive arrays but provides specialized classes for each primitive type instead [26]. The compiler optimizes the code and uses primitive arrays whenever possible. For example, Java's `int[]` corresponds to Kotlin's `IntArray`. These classes compile down to actual primitive arrays to minimize object overhead.

Let's assume we have a function in Java that requires a primitive array:

```
1 public static void takeArray(int[] array) { ... }
```

To call this function from Kotlin without unnecessary boxing, we should use `intArrayOf()` instead of `arrayOf()`. This ensures that the array compiles down to Java's `int[]`, avoiding the overhead of boxed Integer objects. Even in for loops, the Kotlin compiler optimizes iteration over primitive arrays, ensuring that no iterator is created [26]. This results in significant performance improvements compared to iterating over an `Array<Int>`, which would involve additional function calls and object overhead.

```

1 var array: IntArray = intArrayOf(1, 2, 3)
2 takeArray(array) // passes int[] to Java function
3 for (i in array.indices) // no iterator created
4     println(array[i]) // no calls to Array's get() or set()

```

In Java, arrays are covariant, meaning an array of a subtype can be assigned to an array of its superclass. This is allowed at compile time, but Java enforces type safety at runtime. If an instance of a type that differs from the array's original type is assigned to it, an `ArrayStoreException` will be thrown. This happens because mixing different types in the array would break type safety. To counteract this problem, Kotlin simply does not allow this, thus there arrays are invariant [26]. However there is an exception when you need to parse an array to Java, it is allowed for platform types, because Java treats arrays as covariant. If we had a method, that requires an `Object` array, we could parse a string array of platform type to it.

```

1 public static void takeArray(Object[] array) { ... }

```

```

1 var array: Array<String> = arrayOf("string", "array")
2 takeArray(array) // array is treated as platform type

```

### 6.1.5 Interference between Kotlin keywords and Java identifiers

There are a few keywords, such as *in* or *is*, that do not exist in Java, therefore they are valid names for variables or similar identifiers. If there is Java code using those keywords, it is still possible to interact with it using the backtick (`) character [20]. The following example demonstrates this by accessing a Java method named *in* from Kotlin.

```

1 var salesman = Salesman("freddy", 1300)
2 salesman.`in`(list)

```

## 6.2 Call Kotlin in Java

Just as Kotlin can create instances of Java classes, Java can also create and use instances of Kotlin classes [15].

### 6.2.1 Kotlin properties in Java

Kotlin properties cannot be accessed directly from Java and must be used via standard Java syntax. Therefore, the properties are compiled into a private field, along with corresponding getter and setter methods [7]. However, if the Kotlin property is final, no setter method will be created. For example, consider a simple property in the `SalesPerson` class:

```

1 var name: String

```

This will compile to the following components in Java:

```

1 private String name;
2 public String getName() { return name; }
3 public void setName(String name) { this.name = name; }

```

If the getter or setter of a Kotlin property is declared with restricted visibility, such as private or protected, the Kotlin compiler will preserve this visibility when generating the corresponding Java methods.

### 6.2.2 Null safety

If a public Kotlin function with a non-nullable parameter is called from Java, a nullable value can be passed to this function from Java. To retain null safety, Kotlin generates checks for those functions and throws a `NullPointerException` if the value is indeed null [32].

### 6.2.3 Package-level function

Package-level functions are functions, which are defined outside of classes, thus are not dependent on an object. Those functions including extension functions will be converted to static methods inside a new Java class [37] named by the Kotlin file the function oriented from, because in Java methods outside a class are prohibited. For example, consider a Kotlin file named `SalesPerson.kt` in the package `org.company`, containing the following package-level method:

```
1 // SalesPerson.kt
2 package org.company
3 fun createDefault(name: String) { ... }
4 class SalesPerson(var name: String, var salary: Int) { ... }
```

The class will be accessible just like normal, but the `createDefault` function is in a separate class called `SalesPersonKt.class`:

```
1 // create instance as expected
2 new org.company.SalesPerson("Carl", 4200);
3 // createDefault in other class
4 org.company.SalesPersonKt.createDefault("Carl");
```

The name of the generated class can be set using the `@file:JvmName("Example")` annotation in the Kotlin file:

```
1 // SalesPerson.kt
2 @file:JvmName("Example")
3 package org.company
4 ...
```

```
1 // createDefault in Example
2 org.company.Example.createDefault("Carl");
```

If multiple classes use the same name, the compiler would normally throw an error. However, by adding the `@file:JvmMultifileClass` annotation to all of them, all package-level functions with the same class name are combined into a single generated class [37].

### 6.2.4 Instance fields

In Java, it is possible to access public attributes without using getter and setter methods. This kind of direct access is prohibited in Kotlin to maintain code integrity. However, we can add the `@JvmField` annotation before our property to make it accessible in Java through dot notation [22]. The field will have the same visibility as the property in Kotlin<sup>7</sup>. This example demonstrates how to use the annotation.

```
1 class SalesPerson (@JvmField var name:String) {}
```

---

<sup>7</sup>This does not apply to private properties.

```

1 public void example() {
2     SalesPerson person = new SalesPerson("Carl");
3     System.out.println(person.name); // prints 'Carl'
4 }

```

Functions in companion or named objects can be marked as static to be accessed in Java using the same annotation [42], though this topic is beyond the scope of this paper.

### 6.3 Interoperability with JavaScript

Besides interoperability with Java, Kotlin also supports interoperability with JavaScript [41], a scripting language that runs in both the browser and on Node.js servers. To achieve this, you need to create a Kotlin/JS project and compile it with Gradle, a build automation tool commonly used in the Kotlin and Java ecosystems [5], into `.js` files, which can then be used like regular JavaScript files. Unlike Kotlin/Java interoperability, a Kotlin/JS project requires more setup due to the Gradle build system and the specialized Kotlin-to-JavaScript compiler. However, the Kotlin documentation [41] provides a step-by-step setup guide. With this setup, it is possible to use JavaScript libraries or the DOM API [13] for web development using the familiar Kotlin syntax, thus making it a valid alternative to plain JavaScript. Furthermore, Gradle provides features that improve the workflow and simplify the development process.

## 7 Multipatform development

Kotlin can be compiled not only for the JVM but also to native binaries, eliminating the need for a virtual machine as required by Java. This makes Kotlin suitable for use in embedded systems, where running a large virtual machine is not possible. Furthermore, Kotlin is not only interoperable with Java but can also be compiled to pure JavaScript or WebAssembly, making it a viable option for web development as well. For performance-critical applications, Kotlin is also developing interoperability features for C and Objective-C. All those platforms make it ... To furthermore simplify the multipatform development process, Kotlin features a powerful

Multipatform development is a key benefit in Kotlin. By reusing the same code across multibile platforms we can save alot of time writing the code and can concentrate more on the differences between the platforms.

### 7.1 Hierarchical project structure

The Hierarchical project structure is best understood if we think of the source codes as objects with parent- and child-objects. These Objects have properties like the source code and targets. Targets are platforms to which Kotlin should be able to complie the code to and can also be thought of as tags. For example if we want to write an app for apple and androids. The common code used in bothe instances would be in the parent source which is called the commonMain and to which we then add the apple and android Tag to. So we could have the parent object commonMain which has the child objects andoridMain and appleMain in which we only have the specific Code for apple and android products and only have the corresponding tag. Further down the hierarchie we may differentiate between MacOS and IOS and even further down we could differentiate between different models. But as we declare more specific end targets we also need to add these specific tags to every parent object that is connected to the target In this case the appleMain and

androidMain sources would be called intermediate source sets since they sit between the commonMain and the targets.

If we now wanted to compile code for the newest Iphone the tags become important, Kotlin would check every source set(object) for the right tag and compile them together to one source code. If a tag is placed wrong so that the compiler can't reach the target from the commonMain source the compiler would ofcourse break.

## 7.2 Expected and actual declarations

Expected and actual declarations are somewhat similar to abstract functions. In a parent you can declare that this piece of code is expected further down the Hierarchical Structure and will be actually declared there. Just like an abstract function which is declared in a parent object but gets overwritten by the child object. So we could declare an expected Kotlin construct (function, class, interface ...) with the "expect" keyword and use the reference in the common code. In the platform specific source we would need to declare the construct again and mark it as the actual construct with the "actual" keyword.

## 8 Android

This section concentrates on the benefits Kotlin has in the Android environment not only the language itself but also Kotlin based Tools for Android

### 8.1 Jetpack Compose

Jetpack Compose is a Kotlin based UI Tool Kit which eases the process of creating a UI for Android Apps. By taking a different approach to UI coding than XML the needed Code for UI can decrease by up to 50%. Eventhough the size of the APK (Android Package) File and the build time will increase, these downsides are outweighed by the increased productivity and maintainability of the Code.

In the following cases we both times just print Hello World to the UI

#### XML Hello World

```
1 <TextView
2   android:id="@+id/textView"
3   android:layout_width="wrap_content"
4   android:layout_height="wrap_content"
5   android:text="Hello World" />
```

#### Jetpack Compose Hello World

```
1 @Composable
2 fun SimpleText() {
3     Text(text = "Hello World")
4 }
```

As we can see the readability and the needed Code is improved a lot in Jetpack Compose

Jetpack Compose achieves this by letting the user describe what the UI should look like in a given state rather than how the UI should be build. This becomes especially useful when the state changes. If the state changes Jetpack Compose automatically updates and rerenders the important parts. If we wouldn't use Jetpack Compose we would have to manually find the views, update them and manage the state changes ourselves.

Jetpack Compose also combines the UI and the Logic. In XML we can only define the look of for example a button but not the Logic that follows clicking that button. For the Logic we need a sepreate Tool like Activity, there we can define the Logic of the button. But since XML and Activity are two unrealted tools you have to connect the code mannually by using the findViewById command.

```
1 val button = findViewById<Button>(R.id.button)
```

so a simple Button counting up would look in XML and Activity something like:

#### XML UI Button

```
1 <Button
2     android:id="@+id/button"
3     android:layout_width="wrap_content"
4     android:layout_height="wrap_content"
5     android:text="Clicked 0 times" />
```

#### Activity Logic Button

```
1 var count = 0
2 val button = findViewById<Button>(R.id.button)
3 button.setOnClickListener {
4     count++
5     button.text = "Clicked $count times"
6 }
```

Since Jetpack Compose combines UI and Logic the Kotlin code only looks like the following

#### Jetpack Compose Button

```
1 @Composable
2 fun ClickButton() {
3     var count by remember { mutableStateOf(0) }
4     Button(onClick = { count++ }) {
5         Text("Clicked $count times")
6     }
7 }
```

As you might have noticed in the JC Code samples we always write the @Composable Annotation this is very Important so the Compiler knows which functions are meant to be UI elements and should be updated depending on the state. If we tried to create a UI element without the @Composable Annotation it wouldnt be treated as a UI element and if we used a UI function like Text() in our element we would get a Compiler Error.

## 8.2 Coroutines

Now imagine we want to create an app where users can see the sales volume of a certain salesperson live. To achieve this, we would need to check the sales volume every second, which would freeze our app every second until the data of the salesperson is successfully downloaded. So, the smartest solution would be to use multithreading for this process. Multithreading is very common and basically means, that we split up the processeing among multibile threads that we can run parallel. You could imagine the threads like computers running at the same time. If one of them crashes the others are not affected and since they are running at the same time it is in many cases alot faster then if we only had one

computer running everything. As you also couldn't fit unlimited computers in one room, the usage of threads is mainly limited by the amount of memory the program is allowed to use.

#### Java Background Threads

```
1 new Thread(new Runnable() { //opens a new thread
2     public void run() {
3         double sales = getSalesVolume();
4         runOnUiThread(new Runnable() { //switches to main thread
5             public void run() { textView.setText(sales.toString()); }
6         });
7     }
8 }).start();
```

In Kotlin, the equivalent to threads are called coroutines, and they are not only easy to read, as you will see below, but are also very lightweight, which means we can run far more Kotlin coroutines than Java threads before running out of memory or losing too much time. So, we could check thousands of sales personnel at once without running out of memory.

#### Kotlin Coroutines

```
1 GlobalScope.launch { //creates a new coroutine
2     val sales = getSalesVolume()
3     withContext(Dispatchers.Main) { //switches to main thread
4         textView.text = sales
5     }
6 }
```

Kotlin achieves this by using one thread to run multiple coroutines. So if you had a piece of code that pauses inbetween, Kotlin would run a different coroutine while the first one is paused on the same thread thus not having to open up more threads and saving a lot of memory. By managing the coroutines in Kotlin they can switch extremely fast between coroutines in one thread instead of switching the context in threads which are managed by the OS. So coroutines are not really a new version of threads but a system that cleverly manages the resources given to minimize the unnecessary use of Threads. So this would mean if we had really long coroutines that have no pauses in between, Kotlin couldn't run multiple coroutines on one thread and would have to open up multiple threads thus losing the advantage of using coroutines. Kotlin also keeps the threads if they are not in use and sorts them into pools for different usage (IO, Default, Main), so that it can later check these pools for already setup but unused threads. So if you create the first coroutine Kotlin still has to setup a thread but after that Kotlin will reuse that thread as often as it can before it is forced to create a new one. Coroutines also setup very fast, if we already had coroutines setup prior, since we don't have to setup a new thread but are just reusing one that is already there.

### 8.3 Android KTX

Android KTX is a collection of Kotlin-friendly libraries that sit on top of the existing Android APIs. It doesn't replace the Android SDK, but simplifies and enhances it to work better with Kotlin by for example using Coroutines instead of Threads. In the following example we want to save the revenue of a salesman.

---

#### Java save salesman revenue

---

```
1 SharedPreferences prefs =  
    PreferenceManager.getDefaultSharedPreferences(context);  
2 SharedPreferences.Editor editor = prefs.edit();  
3 editor.putFloat("salesman_revenue", 1234.56f);  
4 editor.apply();
```

Kotlin save salesman revenue

```
1 context.defaultSharedPreferences.edit {  
2     putFloat("salesman_revenue", 1234.56f)  
3 }
```

## 9 Conclusion

Kotlin is a modern programming language that offers a concise syntax, improved class structures, and innovative features such as null safety. Its seamless interoperability with Java makes it a great choice for projects integrating with existing codebases and libraries. Kotlin's support for multiplatform development, particularly in Android, establishes it as a powerful option for cross-platform development.

While this paper provides a solid foundation, it only scratches the surface of Kotlin's capabilities. Advanced features such as smart casts, delegation, and destructuring declarations further enhance Kotlin's appeal. By also embracing functional programming paradigms inspired by languages like Haskell, Kotlin enables developers to write cleaner and more maintainable code while still benefiting from its object-oriented capabilities.

These features, combined with its modern design and developer-friendly syntax, make Kotlin a powerful alternative to Java and a compelling choice for developers.



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