

Chapter 3. Object-Oriented Programming in Java

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Java is an object-oriented programming language. As we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), all Java programs use objects, and every Java program is defined as a class. The previous chapter explained the basic syntax of the Java programming language, including data types, operators, and expressions, and even showed how to define simple classes and work with objects. This chapter continues where that one left off, explaining the details of object-oriented programming in Java.

If you do not have any object-oriented (OO) programming background, don't worry; this chapter does not assume any prior experience. If you do have experience with OO programming, however, be careful. The term "object-oriented" has different meanings in different languages. Don't assume that Java works the same way as your favorite OO language. This is particularly true for C++ programmers. We saw in the last chapter that close analogies can be drawn between Java and C. The same is not true for Java and C++, however. Java uses object-oriented programming concepts that are familiar to C++ programmers and even borrows C++ syntax in a number of places, but the similarities between Java and C++ are not nearly as strong as those between Java and C. Don't let your experience with C++ lull you into a false familiarity with Java.

3.1. The Members of a Class

As we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), a class is a collection of data, stored in named fields, and code, organized into named methods, that operates on that data. The fields and methods are called *members* of a class. In Java 1.1 and later, classes can also contain other classes. These member classes, or inner classes, are an advanced feature that is discussed later in the chapter. For now, we are going to discuss only fields and methods. The members of a class

come in two distinct types: class, or static, members are associated with the class itself, while instance members are associated with individual instances of the class (i.e., with objects). Ignoring member classes for now, this gives us four types of members:

- Class fields
- Class methods
- Instance fields
- Instance methods

The simple class definition for the class `Circle`, shown in [Example 3-1](#), contains all four types of members.

Example 3-1. A Simple Class and its Members

```
public class Circle {
    // A class field
    public static final double PI= 3.14159;      // A useful constant

    // A class method: just compute a value based on the arguments
    public static double radiansToDegrees(double rads) {
        return rads * 180 / PI;
    }

    // An instance field
    public double r;                             // The radius of the circle

    // Two instance methods: they operate on the instance fields of an object
    public double area() {                       // Compute the area of the circle
        return PI * r * r;
    }
    public double circumference() {             // Compute the circumference of the circle
        return 2 * PI * r;
    }
}
```

3.1.1. Class Fields

A *classfield* is associated with the class in which it is defined, rather than with an instance of the class. The following line declares a class field:

```
public static final double PI = 3.14159;
```

This line declares a field of type `double` named `PI` and assigns it a value of 3.14159. As you can see, a field declaration looks quite a bit like the local variable declarations we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#). The difference, of course, is that variables are defined within methods, while fields are members of classes.

The `static` modifier says that the field is a class field. Class fields are sometimes called static fields because of this

`static` modifier. The `final` modifier says that the value of the field does not change. Since the field `PI` represents a constant, we declare it `final` so that it cannot be changed. It is a convention in Java (and many other languages) that constants are named with capital letters, which is why our field is named `PI`, not `pi`. Defining constants like this is a common use for class fields, meaning that the `static` and `final` modifiers are often used together. Not all class fields are constants, however. In other words, a field can be declared `static` without declaring it `final`. Finally, the `public` modifier says that anyone can use the field. This is a visibility modifier, and we'll discuss it and related modifiers in more detail later in this chapter.

The key point to understand about a static field is that there is only a single copy of it. This field is associated with the class itself, not with instances of the class. If you look at the various methods of the `Circle` class, you'll see that they use this field. From inside the `Circle` class, the field can be referred to simply as `PI`. Outside the class, however, both class and field names are required to uniquely specify the field. Methods that are not part of `Circle` access this field as `Circle.PI`.

A class field is essentially a global variable. The names of class fields are qualified by the unique names of the classes that contain them, however. Thus, Java does not suffer from the name collisions that can affect other languages when different modules of code define global variables with the same name.

3.1.2. Class Methods

As with class fields, *class methods* are declared with the `static` modifier:

```
public static double radiansToDegrees(double rads) { return rads * 180 / PI; }
```

This line declares a class method named `radiansToDegrees()`. It has a single parameter of type `double` and returns a `double` value. The body of the method is quite short; it performs a simple computation and returns the result.

Like class fields, class methods are associated with a class, rather than with an object. When invoking a class method from code that exists outside the class, you must specify both the name of the class and the method. For example:

```
// How many degrees is 2.0 radians?
double d = Circle.radiansToDegrees(2.0);
```

If you want to invoke a class method from inside the class in which it is defined, you don't have to specify the class name. However, it is often good style to specify the class name anyway, to make it clear that a class method is being invoked.

Note that the body of our `Circle.radiansToDegrees()` method uses the class field `PI`. A class method can use any class fields and class methods of its own class (or of any other class). But it cannot use any instance fields or instance methods because class methods are not associated with an instance of the class. In other words, although the `radiansToDegrees()` method is defined in the `Circle` class, it does not use any `Circle` objects. The instance fields and instance methods of the class are associated with `Circle` objects, not with the class itself. Since a class method is not associated with an instance of its class, it cannot use any instance methods or fields.

As we discussed earlier, a class field is essentially a global variable. In a similar way, a class method is a global method, or global function. Although `radiansToDegrees()` does not operate on `Circle` objects, it is defined within the `Circle` class because it is a utility method that is sometimes useful when working with circles. In many non-object-oriented programming languages, all methods, or functions, are global. You can write complex Java programs using only class methods. This is not object-oriented programming, however, and does not take advantage of the power of the Java language. To do true object-oriented programming, we need to add instance fields and instance methods to our repertoire.

3.1.3. Instance Fields

Any field declared without the `static` modifier is an *instance field*:

```
public double r;    // The radius of the circle
```

Instance fields are associated with instances of the class, rather than with the class itself. Thus, every `Circle` object we create has its own copy of the `double` field `r`. In our example, `r` represents the radius of a circle. Thus, each `Circle` object can have a radius independent of all other `Circle` objects.

Inside a class definition, instance fields are referred to by name alone. You can see an example of this if you look at the method body of the `circumference()` instance method. In code outside the class, the name of an instance method must be prepended by a reference to the object that contains it. For example, if we have a `Circle` object named `c`, we can refer to its instance field `r` as `c.r`:

```
Circle c = new Circle(); // Create a new Circle object; store it in variable c
c.r = 2.0;                // Assign a value to its instance field r
Circle d = new Circle(); // Create a different Circle object
d.r = c.r * 2;            // Make this one twice as big
```

Instance fields are key to object-oriented programming. Instance fields define an object; the values of those fields make one object distinct from another.

3.1.4. Instance Methods

Any method not declared with the `static` keyword is an instance method. An *instancemethod* operates on an instance of a class (an object) instead of operating on the class itself. It is with instance methods that object-oriented programming starts to get interesting. The `Circle` class defined in [Example 3-1](#) contains two instance methods, `area()` and `circumference()`, that compute and return the area and circumference of the circle represented by a given `Circle` object.

To use an instance method from outside the class in which it is defined, we must prepend a reference to the instance that is to be operated on. For example:

```
Circle c = new Circle(); // Create a Circle object; store in variable c
c.r = 2.0;                // Set an instance field of the object
double a = c.area();      // Invoke an instance method of the object
```

If you're new to object-oriented programming, that last line of code may look a little strange. I did not write:

```
a = area(c);
```

Instead, I wrote:

```
a = c.area();
```

This is why it is called object-oriented programming; the object is the focus here, not the function call. This small syntactic

difference is perhaps the single most important feature of the object-oriented paradigm.

The point here is that we don't have to pass an argument to `c.area()`. The object we are operating on, `c`, is implicit in the syntax. Take a look at [Example 3-1](#) again. You'll notice the same thing in the signature of the `area()` method: it doesn't have a parameter. Now look at the body of the `area()` method: it uses the instance field `r`. Because the `area()` method is part of the same class that defines this instance field, the method can use the unqualified name `r`. It is understood that this refers to the radius of whatever `Circle` instance invokes the method.

Another important thing to notice about the bodies of the `area()` and `circumference()` methods is that they both use the class field `PI`. We saw earlier that class methods can use only class fields and class methods, not instance fields or methods. Instance methods are not restricted in this way: they can use any member of a class, whether it is declared `static` or not.

3.1.4.1. How instance methods work

Consider this line of code again:

```
a = c.area();
```

What's going on here? How can a method that has no parameters know what data to operate on? In fact, the `area()` method does have a parameter. All instance methods are implemented with an implicit parameter not shown in the method signature. The implicit argument is named `this`; it holds a reference to the object through which the method is invoked. In our example, that object is a `Circle`.

The implicit `this` parameter is not shown in method signatures because it is usually not needed; whenever a Java method accesses the fields in its class, it is implied that it is accessing fields in the object referred to by the `this` parameter. The same is true when an instance method invokes another instance method in the same class. I said earlier that to invoke an instance method you must prepend a reference to the object to be operated on. When an instance method is invoked within another instance method in the same class, however, you don't need to specify an object. In this case, it is implicit that the method is being invoked on the `this` object.

You can use the `this` keyword explicitly when you want to make it clear that a method is accessing its own fields and/or methods. For example, we can rewrite the `area()` method to use `this` explicitly to refer to instance fields:

```
public double area() {
    return Circle.PI * this.r * this.r;
}
```

This code also uses the class name explicitly to refer to class field `PI`. In a method this simple, it is not necessary to be explicit. In more complicated cases, however, you may find that it increases the clarity of your code to use an explicit `this` where it is not strictly required.

There are some cases in which the `this` keyword *is* required, however. For example, when a method parameter or local variable in a method has the same name as one of the fields of the class, you must use `this` to refer to the field, since the field name used alone refers to the method parameter or local variable. For example, we can add the following method to the `Circle` class:

```
public void setRadius(double r) {
    this.r = r;           // Assign the argument (r) to the field (this.r)
```

```

        // Note that we cannot just say r = r
    }

```

Finally, note that while instance methods can use the `this` keyword, class methods cannot. This is because class methods are not associated with objects.

3.1.4.2. Instance methods or class methods?

Instance methods are one of the key features of object-oriented programming. That doesn't mean, however, that you should shun class methods. There are many cases in which it is perfectly reasonable to define class methods. When working with the `Circle` class, for example, you might find there are many times you want to compute the area of a circle with a given radius, but don't want to bother creating a `Circle` object to represent that circle. In this case, a class method is more convenient:

```
public static double area(double r) { return PI * r * r; }
```

It is perfectly legal for a class to define more than one method with the same name, as long as the methods have different parameters. Since this version of the `area()` method is a class method, it does not have an implicit `this` parameter and must have a parameter that specifies the radius of the circle. This parameter keeps it distinct from the instance method of the same name.

As another example of the choice between instance methods and class methods, consider defining a method named `bigger()` that examines two `Circle` objects and returns whichever has the larger radius. We can write `bigger()` as an instance method as follows:

```

// Compare the implicit "this" circle to the "that" circle passed
// explicitly as an argument and return the bigger one.
public Circle bigger(Circle that) {
    if (this.r > that.r) return this;
    else return that;
}

```

We can also implement `bigger()` as a class method as follows:

```

// Compare circle a to circle b and return the one with the larger radius
public static Circle bigger(Circle a, Circle b) {
    if (a.r > b.r) return a;
    else return b;
}

```

Given two `Circle` objects, `x` and `y`, we can use either the instance method or the class method to determine which is bigger. The invocation syntax differs significantly for the two methods, however:

```

Circle biggest = x.bigger(y);           // Instance method: also y.bigger(x)
Circle biggest = Circle.bigger(x, y);    // Static method

```

Neither option is the correct choice. The instance method is more formally object-oriented, but its invocation syntax suffers from a kind of asymmetry. In a case like this, the choice between an instance method and a class method is simply a design decision. Depending on the circumstances, one or the other will likely be the more natural choice.

3.1.5. A Mystery Solved

As we saw in [Chapter 1, "Introduction"](#) and [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), the way to display textual output to the terminal in Java is with a method named `System.out.println()`. Those chapters never explained why this method has such an long, awkward name or what those two periods are doing in it. Now that you understand class and instance fields and class and instance methods, it is easier to understand what is going on. Here's the story: `System` is a class. It has a class field named `out`. The field `System.out` refers to an object. The object `System.out` has an instance method named `println()`. Mystery solved! If you want to explore this in more detail, you can look up the `java.lang.System` class in [Chapter 12, "The java.lang Package"](#). The class synopsis there tells you that the field `out` is of type `java.io.PrintStream`, which you can look up in [Chapter 11, "The java.io Package"](#).

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3.2. Creating and Initializing
Objects

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3.2. Creating and Initializing Objects

Take another look at how we've been creating `Circle` objects:

```
Circle c = new Circle();
```

What are those parentheses doing there? They make it look like we're calling a method. In fact, that is exactly what we're doing. Every class in Java has at least one *constructor*, which is a method that has the same name as the class and whose purpose is to perform any necessary initialization for a new object. Since we didn't explicitly define a constructor for our `Circle` class in [Example 3-1](#), Java gave us a default constructor that takes no arguments and performs no special initialization.

Here's how a constructor works. The `new` operator creates a new, but uninitialized, instance of the class. The constructor method is then called, with the new object passed implicitly (a `this` reference, as we saw earlier), and whatever arguments that are specified between parentheses passed explicitly. The constructor can use these arguments to do whatever initialization is necessary.

3.2.1. Defining a Constructor

There is some obvious initialization we could do for our circle objects, so let's define a constructor. [Example 3-2](#) shows a new definition for `Circle` that contains a constructor that lets us specify the radius of a new `Circle` object. The constructor also uses the `this` reference to distinguish between a method parameter and an instance field that have the same name.

Example 3-2. A Constructor for the Circle Class

```
public class Circle {
    public static final double PI = 3.14159; // A constant
    public double r; // An instance field that holds the radius of the circle

    // The constructor method: initialize the radius field
    public Circle(double r) { this.r = r; }

    // The instance methods: compute values based on the radius
    public double circumference() { return 2 * PI * r; }
    public double area() { return PI * r*r; }
}
```

When we relied on the default constructor supplied by the compiler, we had to write code like this to initialize the radius explicitly:

```
Circle c = new Circle();
```



```
c.r = 0.25;
```

With this new constructor, the initialization becomes part of the object creation step:

```
Circle c = new Circle(0.25);
```

Here are some important notes about naming, declaring, and writing constructors:

- The constructor name is always the same as the class name.
- Unlike all other methods, a constructor is declared without a return type, not even `void`.
- The body of a constructor should initialize the `this` object.
- A constructor should not return `this` or any other value.

3.2.2. Defining Multiple Constructors

Sometimes you want to initialize an object in a number of different ways, depending on what is most convenient in a particular circumstance. For example, we might want to initialize the radius of a circle to a specified value or a reasonable default value. Since our `Circle` class has only a single instance field, there aren't too many ways we can initialize it, of course. But in more complex classes, it is often convenient to define a variety of constructors. Here's how we can define two constructors for `Circle`:

```
public Circle() { r = 1.0; }
public Circle(double r) { this.r = r; }
```

It is perfectly legal to define multiple constructors for a class, as long as each constructor has a different parameter list. The compiler determines which constructor you wish based on the number and type of arguments you supply. This is simply an example of method overloading, which we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#).

3.2.3. Invoking One Constructor from Another

There is a specialized use of the `this` keyword that arises when a class has multiple constructors; it can be used from a constructor to invoke one of the other constructors of the same class. In other words, we can rewrite the two previous `Circle` constructors as follows:

```
// This is the basic constructor: initialize the radius
public Circle(double r) { this.r = r; }
// This constructor uses this() to invoke the constructor above
public Circle() { this(1.0); }
```

The `this()` syntax is a method invocation that calls one of the other constructors of the class. The particular constructor that is invoked is determined by the number and type of arguments, of course. This is a useful technique when a number of constructors share a significant amount of initialization code, as it avoids repetition of that code. This would be a more impressive example, of course, if the one-parameter version of the `Circle()` constructor did more initialization than it does.

There is an important restriction on using `this()`: it can appear only as the first statement in a constructor. It may, of course, be followed by any additional initialization a particular version of the constructor needs to do. The reason for this restriction involves the automatic invocation of superclass constructor methods, which we'll explore later in this chapter.

3.2.4. Field Defaults and Initializers

Not every field of a class requires initialization. Unlike local variables, which have no default value and cannot be used until explicitly initialized, the fields of a class are automatically initialized to the default values shown in [Table 3-2](#). Essentially, every field of a primitive type is initialized to a default value of `false` or zero, as appropriate. All fields of reference type are, by default, initialized to `null`. These default values are guaranteed by Java. If the default value of a field is appropriate, you can simply rely on it without explicitly initializing the field. This default initialization applies to both instance fields and class fields.

As we've seen, the syntax for declaring a field of a class is a lot like the syntax for declaring a local variable. Both class and instance field declarations can be followed by an equals sign and an initial value, as in:

```
public static final double PI = 3.14159;
public double r = 1.0;
```

As we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), a variable declaration is a statement that appears within a Java method; the variable initialization is performed when the statement is executed. Field declarations, however, are not part of any method, so they cannot be executed as statements are. Instead, the Java compiler generates instance-field initialization code automatically and puts it in the constructor or constructors for the class. The initialization code is inserted into a constructor in the order it appears in the source code, which means that a field initializer can use the initial values of fields declared before it. Consider the following code excerpt, which shows a constructor and two instance fields of a hypothetical class:

```
public class TestClass {
    ... public int len = 10;
    public int[] table = new int[len];

    public TestClass() {
        for(int i = 0; i < len; i++) table[i] = i;
    }

    // Rest of the class is omitted...
}
```

In this case, the code generated for the constructor is actually equivalent to the following:

```
public TestClass() {
    len = 10;
    table = new int[len];
    for(int i = 0; i < len; i++) table[i] = i;
}
```

If a constructor begins with a `this()` call to another constructor, the field initialization code does not appear in the first constructor. Instead, the initialization is handled in the constructor invoked by the `this()` call.

So, if instance fields are initialized in constructor methods, where are class fields initialized? These fields are associated with

the class, even if no instances of the class are ever created, so they need to be initialized even before a constructor is called. To support this, the Java compiler generates a class initialization method automatically for every class. Class fields are initialized in the body of this method, which is guaranteed to be invoked exactly once before the class is first used (often when the class is first loaded). As with instance field initialization, class field initialization expressions are inserted into the class initialization method in the order they appear in the source code. This means that the initialization expression for a class field can use the class fields declared before it. The class initialization method is an internal method that is hidden from Java programmers. If you disassemble the byte codes in a Java class file, however, you'll see the class initialization code in a method named `<clinit>`.

3.2.4.1. Initializer blocks

So far, we've seen that objects can be initialized through the initialization expressions for their fields and by arbitrary code in their constructor methods. A class has a class initialization method, which is like a constructor, but we cannot explicitly define the body of this method as we can for a constructor. Java does allow us to write arbitrary code for the initialization of class fields, however, with a construct known as a *static initializer*. A static initializer is simply the keyword `static` followed by a block of code in curly braces. A static initializer can appear in a class definition anywhere a field or method definition can appear. For example, consider the following code that performs some nontrivial initialization for two class fields:

```
// We can draw the outline of a circle using trigonometric functions
// Trigonometry is slow, though, so we precompute a bunch of values
public class TrigCircle {
    // Here are our static lookup tables and their own simple initializers
    private static final NUMPTS = 500;
    private static double sines[] = new double[NUMPTS];
    private static double cosines[] = new double[NUMPTS];

    // Here's a static initializer that fills in the arrays
    static {
        double x = 0.0, delta_x;
        delta_x = (Circle.PI/2)/(NUMPTS-1);
        for(int i = 0, x = 0.0; i < NUMPTS; i++, x += delta_x) {
            sines[i] = Math.sin(x);
            cosines[i] = Math.cos(x);
        }
    }
    // The rest of the class is omitted... }
```

A class can have any number of static initializers. The body of each initializer block is incorporated into the class initialization method, along with any static field initialization expressions. A static initializer is like a class method in that it cannot use the `this` keyword or any instance fields or instance methods of the class.

In Java 1.1 and later, classes are also allowed to have instance initializers. An instance initializer is like a static initializer, except that it initializes an object, not a class. A class can have any number of instance initializers, and they can appear anywhere a field or method definition can appear. The body of each instance initializer is inserted at the beginning of every constructor for the class, along with any field initialization expressions. An instance initializer looks just like a static initializer, except that it doesn't use the `static` keyword. In other words, an instance initializer is just a block of arbitrary Java code that appears within curly braces.

Instance initializers can initialize arrays or other fields that require complex initialization. They are sometimes useful because

they locate the initialization code right next to the field, instead of separating it off in a constructor method. For example:

```
private static final int NUMPTS = 100;
private int[] data = new int[NUMPTS];
{ for(int i = 0; i < NUMPTS; i++) data[i] = i; }
```

In practice, however, this use of instance initializers is fairly rare. Instance initializers were introduced in Java to support anonymous inner classes, and that is their main utility (we'll discuss anonymous inner classes later in this chapter).

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[3.3. Destroying and
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3.3. Destroying and Finalizing Objects

Now that we've seen how new objects are created and initialized in Java, we need to study the other end of the object life cycle and examine how objects are finalized and destroyed. *Finalization* is the opposite of initialization.

As I mentioned in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), the memory occupied by an object is automatically reclaimed when the object is no longer needed. This is done through a process known as *garbagecollection*. Garbage collection is not some newfangled technique; it has been around for years in languages such as Lisp. It just takes some getting used to for programmers accustomed to such languages as C and C++, in which you must call the `free()` method or the `delete` operator to reclaim memory. The fact that you don't need to remember to destroy every object you create is one of the features that makes Java a pleasant language to work with. It is also one of the features that makes programs written in Java less prone to bugs than those written in languages that don't support automatic garbage collection.

3.3.1. Garbage Collection

The Java interpreter knows exactly what objects and arrays it has allocated. It can also figure out which local variables refer to which objects and arrays, and which objects and arrays refer to which other objects and arrays. Thus, the interpreter is able to determine when an allocated object is no longer referred to by any other object or variable. When the interpreter finds such an object, it knows it can destroy the object safely and does so. The garbage collector can also detect and destroy cycles of objects that refer to each other, but are not referenced by any other active objects. Any such cycles are also reclaimed.

The Java garbage collector runs as a low-priority thread, so it does most of its work when nothing else is going on, such as during idle time while waiting for user input. The only time the garbage collector must run while something high-priority is going on (i.e., the only time it will actually slow down the system) is when available memory has become dangerously low. This doesn't happen very often because the low-priority thread cleans things up in the background.

This scheme may sound slow and wasteful of memory. Actually though, modern garbage collectors can be surprisingly efficient. Garbage collection will never be as efficient as well-written, explicit memory allocation and deallocation. But it does make programming a lot easier and less prone to bugs. And for most real-world programs, rapid development, lack of bugs, and easy maintenance are more important features than raw speed or memory efficiency.

3.3.2. Memory Leaks in Java

The fact that Java supports garbage collection dramatically reduces the incidence of a class of bugs known as *memory leaks*. A memory leak occurs when memory is allocated and never reclaimed. At first glance, it might seem that

garbage collection prevents all memory leaks because it reclaims all unused objects. A memory leak can still occur in Java, however, if a valid (but unused) reference to an unused object is left hanging around. For example, when a method runs for a long time (or forever), the local variables in that method can retain object references much longer than they are actually required. The following code illustrates:

```
public static void main(String argso[]) {
    int big_array[] = new int[100000];

    // Do some computations with big_array and get a result.
    int result = compute(big_array);

    // We no longer need big_array. It will get garbage collected when there
    // are no more references to it. Since big_array is a local variable,
    // it refers to the array until this method returns. But this method
    // doesn't return. So we've got to explicitly get rid of the reference
    // ourselves, so the garbage collector knows it can reclaim the array.
    big_array = null;

    // Loop forever, handling the user's input
    for(;;) handle_input(result);
}
```

Memory leaks can also occur when you use a hashtable or similar data structure to associate one object with another. Even when neither object is required anymore, the association remains in the hashtable, preventing the objects from being reclaimed until the hashtable itself is reclaimed. If the hashtable has a substantially longer lifetime than the objects it holds, this can cause memory leaks.

3.3.3. Object Finalization

A *finalizer* in Java is the opposite of a constructor. While a constructor method performs initialization for an object, a finalizer method performs finalization for the object. Garbage collection automatically frees up the memory resources used by objects, but objects can hold other kinds of resources, such as open files and network connections. The garbage collector cannot free these resources for you, so you need to write a finalizer method for any object that needs to perform such tasks as closing files, terminating network connections, deleting temporary files, and so on.

A finalizer is an instance method that takes no arguments and returns no value. There can be only one finalizer per class, and it must be named `finalize()`. [\[1\]](#) A finalizer can throw any kind of exception or error, but when a finalizer is automatically invoked by the garbage collector, any exception or error it throws is ignored and serves only to cause the finalizer method to return. Finalizer methods are typically declared `protected` (which we have not discussed yet), but can also be declared `public`. An example finalizer looks like this:

[1]C++ programmers should note that although Java constructor methods are named like C++ constructors, Java finalization methods are not named like C++ destructor methods. As we will see, they do not behave quite like C++ destructor methods, either.

```
protected void finalize() throws Throwable {
    // Invoke the finalizer of our superclass
}
```

```
// We haven't discussed superclasses or this syntax yet
super.finalize();

// Delete a temporary file we were using
// If the file doesn't exist or tempfile is null, this can throw
// an exception, but that exception is ignored.
tempfile.delete();
}
```

Here are some important points about finalizers:

- If an object has a finalizer, the finalizer method is invoked sometime after the object becomes unused (or unreachable), but before the garbage collector reclaims the object.
- Java makes no guarantees about when garbage collection will occur or in what order objects will be collected. Therefore, Java can make no guarantees about when (or even whether) a finalizer will be invoked, in what order finalizers will be invoked, or what thread will execute finalizers.
- The Java interpreter can exit without garbage collecting all outstanding objects, so some finalizers may never be invoked. In this case, though, any outstanding resources are usually freed by the operating system. In Java 1.1, the `Runtime` method `runFinalizersOnExit()` can force the virtual machine to run finalizers before exiting. Unfortunately, however, this method can cause deadlock and is inherently unsafe; it has been deprecated as of Java 1.2. In Java 1.3, the `Runtime` method `addShutdownHook()` can safely execute arbitrary code before the Java interpreter exits.
- After a finalizer is invoked, objects are not freed right away. This is because a finalizer method can resurrect an object by storing the `this` pointer somewhere so that the object once again has references. Thus, after `finalize()` is called, the garbage collector must once again determine that the object is unreferenced before it can garbage-collect it. However, even if an object is resurrected, the finalizer method is never invoked more than once. Resurrecting an object is never a useful thing to do--just a strange quirk of object finalization. As of Java 1.2, the `java.lang.ref.PhantomReference` class can implement an alternative to finalization that does not allow resurrection.

In practice, it is relatively rare for an application-level class to require a `finalize()` method. Finalizer methods are more useful, however, when writing Java classes that interface to native platform code with `native` methods. In this case, the native implementation can allocate memory or other resources that are not under the control of the Java garbage collector and need to be reclaimed explicitly by a `nativefinalize()` method.

While Java supports both class and instance initialization through static initializers and constructors, it provides only a facility for instance finalization. The original Java specification called for a `classFinalize()` method that could finalize a class when the class itself became unused and was unloaded from the VM. This feature was never implemented, however, and because it has proved to be unnecessary, class finalization has been removed from the language specification.

3.4. Subclasses and Inheritance

The `Circle` defined earlier is a simple class that distinguishes circle objects only by their radii. Suppose, instead, that we want to represent circles that have both a size and a position. For example, a circle of radius 1.0 centered at point 0,0 in the Cartesian plane is different from the circle of radius 1.0 centered at point 1,2. To do this, we need a new class, which we'll call `PlaneCircle`. We'd like to add the ability to represent the position of a circle without losing any of the existing functionality of the `Circle` class. This is done by defining `PlaneCircle` as a subclass of `Circle`, so that `PlaneCircle` inherits the fields and methods of its superclass, `Circle`. The ability to add functionality to a class by subclassing, or extending, it is central to the object-oriented programming paradigm.

3.4.1. Extending a Class

[Example 3-3](#) shows how we can implement `PlaneCircle` as a subclass of the `Circle` class.

Example 3-3. Extending the Circle Class

```
public class PlaneCircle extends Circle {
    // We automatically inherit the fields and methods of Circle,
    // so we only have to put the new stuff here.
    // New instance fields that store the center point of the circle
    public double cx, cy;

    // A new constructor method to initialize the new fields
    // It uses a special syntax to invoke the Circle() constructor
    public PlaneCircle(double r, double x, double y) {
        super(r);          // Invoke the constructor of the superclass, Circle()
        this.cx = x;        // Initialize the instance field cx
        this.cy = y;        // Initialize the instance field cy
    }

    // The area() and circumference() methods are inherited from Circle
    // A new instance method that checks whether a point is inside the circle
    // Note that it uses the inherited instance field r
    public boolean isInside(double x, double y) {
        double dx = x - cx, dy = y - cy;           // Distance from center
        double distance = Math.sqrt(dx*dx + dy*dy); // Pythagorean theorem
        return (distance < r);                      // Returns true or false
    }
}
```

Note the use of the keyword `extends` in the first line of [Example 3-3](#). This keyword tells Java that `PlaneCircle` extends, or subclasses, `Circle`, meaning that it inherits the fields and methods of that class.[\[2\]](#) The definition of the

`isInside()` method shows field inheritance; this method uses the field `r` (defined by the `Circle` class) as if it were defined right in `PlaneCircle` itself. `PlaneCircle` also inherits the methods of `Circle`. Thus, if we have a `PlaneCircle` object referenced by variable `pc`, we can say:

[2]C++ programmers should note that `extends` is the Java equivalent of `:` in C++; both are used to indicate the superclass of a class.

```
double ratio = pc.circumference() / pc.area();
```

This works just as if the `area()` and `circumference()` methods were defined in `PlaneCircle` itself.

Another feature of subclassing is that every `PlaneCircle` object is also a perfectly legal `Circle` object. Thus, if `pc` refers to a `PlaneCircle` object, we can assign it to a `Circle` variable and forget all about its extra positioning capabilities:

```
PlaneCircle pc = new PlaneCircle(1.0, 0.0, 0.0); // Unit circle at the origin
Circle c = pc; // Assigned to a Circle variable without casting
```

This assignment of a `PlaneCircle` object to a `Circle` variable can be done without a cast. As we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), this is a widening conversion and is always legal. The value held in the `Circle` variable `c` is still a valid `PlaneCircle` object, but the compiler cannot know this for sure, so it doesn't allow us to do the opposite (narrowing) conversion without a cast:

```
// Narrowing conversions require a cast (and a runtime check by the VM)
PlaneCircle pc2 = (PlaneCircle) c;
boolean origininside = ((PlaneCircle) c).isInside(0.0, 0.0);
```

3.4.1.1. Final classes

When a class is declared with the `final` modifier, it means that it cannot be extended or subclassed.

`java.lang.System` is an example of a `final` class. Declaring a class `final` prevents unwanted extensions to the class, and it also allows the compiler to make some optimizations when invoking the methods of a class. We'll explore this in more detail later in this chapter, when we talk about method overriding.

3.4.2. Superclasses, Object, and the Class Hierarchy

In our example, `PlaneCircle` is a subclass of `Circle`. We can also say that `Circle` is the superclass of `PlaneCircle`. The superclass of a class is specified in its `extends` clause:

```
public class PlaneCircle extends Circle { ... }
```

Every class you define has a superclass. If you do not specify the superclass with an `extends` clause, the superclass is the class `java.lang.Object`. `Object` is a special class for a couple of reasons:

- It is the only class in Java that does not have a superclass.
- All Java classes inherit the methods of `Object`.

Because every class has a superclass, classes in Java form a class hierarchy, which can be represented as a tree with `Object` at its root. [Figure 3-1](#) shows a class hierarchy diagram that includes our `Circle` and `PlaneCircle` classes, as well as some of the standard classes from the Java API. Every API quick-reference chapter in [Part 2, "API Quick Reference"](#) includes a class-hierarchy diagram for the classes it documents.

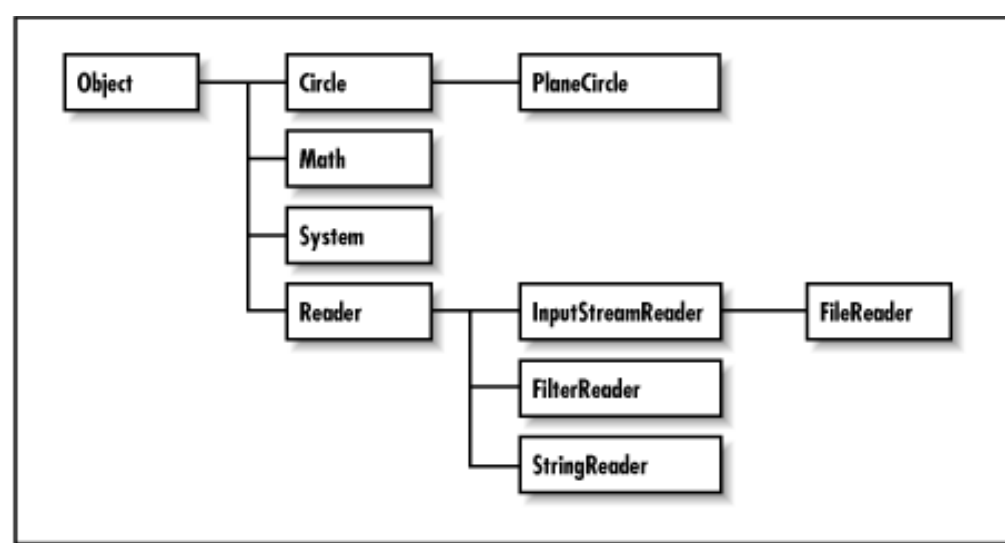


Figure 3-1. A class hierarchy diagram

3.4.3. Subclass Constructors

Look again at the `PlaneCircle()` constructor method of [Example 3-3](#):

```

public PlaneCircle(double r, double x, double y) {
    super(r);          // Invoke the constructor of the superclass, Circle()
    this.cx = x;        // Initialize the instance field cx
    this.cy = y;        // Initialize the instance field cy
}

```

This constructor explicitly initializes the `cx` and `cy` fields newly defined by `PlaneCircle`, but it relies on the superclass `Circle()` constructor to initialize the inherited fields of the class. To invoke the superclass constructor, our constructor calls `super()`. `super` is a reserved word in Java. One of its uses is to invoke the constructor method of a superclass from within the constructor method of a subclass. This use is analogous to the use of `this()` to invoke one constructor method of a class from within another constructor method of the same class. Using `super()` to invoke a constructor is subject to the same restrictions as using `this()` to invoke a constructor:

- `super()` can be used in this way only within a constructor method.
- The call to the superclass constructor must appear as the first statement within the constructor method, even before local variable declarations.

The arguments passed to `super()` must match the parameters of the superclass constructor. If the superclass defines more than one constructor, `super()` can be used to invoke any one of them, depending on the arguments passed.

3.4.4. Constructor Chaining and the Default Constructor

Java guarantees that the constructor method of a class is called whenever an instance of that class is created. It also guarantees that the constructor is called whenever an instance of any subclass is created. In order to guarantee this second point, Java must ensure that every constructor method calls its superclass constructor method. Thus, if the first statement in a constructor does not explicitly invoke another constructor with `this()` or `super()`, Java implicitly inserts the call `super()`; that is, it calls the superclass constructor with no arguments. If the superclass does not have a constructor that takes no arguments, this implicit invocation causes a compilation error.

Consider what happens when we create a new instance of the `PlaneCircle` class. First, the `PlaneCircle` constructor is invoked. This constructor explicitly calls `super(r)` to invoke a `Circle` constructor, and that `Circle()` constructor implicitly calls `super()` to invoke the constructor of its superclass, `Object`. The body of the `Object` constructor runs first. When it returns, the body of the `Circle()` constructor runs. Finally, when the call to `super(r)` returns, the remaining statements of the `PlaneCircle()` constructor are executed.

What all this means is that constructor calls are chained; any time an object is created, a sequence of constructor methods is invoked, from subclass to superclass on up to `Object` at the root of the class hierarchy. Because a superclass constructor is always invoked as the first statement of its subclass constructor, the body of the `Object` constructor always runs first, followed by the constructor of its subclass and on down the class hierarchy to the class that is being instantiated. There is an important implication here; when a constructor is invoked, it can count on the fields of its superclass to be initialized.

3.4.4.1. The default constructor

There is one missing piece in the previous description of constructor chaining. If a constructor does not invoke a superclass constructor, Java does so implicitly. But what if a class is declared without a constructor? In this case, Java implicitly adds a constructor to the class. This default constructor does nothing but invoke the superclass constructor. For example, if we don't declare a constructor for the `PlaneCircle` class, Java implicitly inserts this constructor:

```
public PlaneCircle() { super(); }
```

If the superclass, `Circle`, doesn't declare a no-argument constructor, the `super()` call in this automatically inserted default constructor for `PlaneCircle()` causes a compilation error. In general, if a class does not define a no-argument constructor, all its subclasses must define constructors that explicitly invoke the superclass constructor with the necessary arguments.

If a class does not declare any constructors, it is given a no-argument constructor by default. Classes declared `public` are given `public` constructors. All other classes are given a default constructor that is declared without any visibility modifier: such a constructor has default visibility. (The notion of visibility is explained later in this chapter.) If you are creating a `public` class that should not be publicly instantiated, you should declare at least one non-`public` constructor to prevent the insertion of a default `public` constructor. Classes that should never be instantiated (such as `java.lang.Math` or `java.lang.System`) should define a `private` constructor. Such a constructor can never be invoked from outside of the class, but it prevents the automatic insertion of the default constructor.

3.4.4.2. Finalizer chaining?

You might assume that, since Java chains constructor methods, it also automatically chains the finalizer methods for an object. In other words, you might assume that the finalizer method of a class automatically invokes the finalizer of its superclass, and so on. In fact, Java does *not* do this. When you write a `finalize()` method, you must explicitly invoke the superclass finalizer. (You should do this even if you know that the superclass does not have a finalizer because a future implementation of the superclass might add a finalizer.)

As we saw in our example finalizer earlier in the chapter, you can invoke a superclass method with a special syntax that uses the `super` keyword:

```
// Invoke the finalizer of our superclass. super.finalize();
```

We'll discuss this syntax in more detail when we consider method overriding. In practice, the need for finalizer methods, and thus finalizer chaining, rarely arises.

3.4.5. Shadowing Superclass Fields

For the sake of example, imagine that our `PlaneCircle` class needs to know the distance between the center of the circle and the origin (0,0). We can add another instance field to hold this value:

```
public double r;
```

Adding the following line to the constructor computes the value of the field:

```
this.r = Math.sqrt(cx*cx + cy*cy); // Pythagorean Theorem
```

But wait, this new field `r` has the same name as the radius field `r` in the `Circle` superclass. When this happens, we say that the field `r` of `PlaneCircle` *shadows* the field `r` of `Circle`. (This is a contrived example, of course: the new field should really be called `distanceFromOrigin`. Although you should attempt to avoid it, subclass fields do sometimes shadow fields of their superclass.)

With this new definition of `PlaneCircle`, the expressions `r` and `this.r` both refer to the field of `PlaneCircle`. How, then, can we refer to the field `r` of `Circle` that holds the radius of the circle? There is a special syntax for this that uses the `super` keyword:

```
r           // Refers to the PlaneCircle field
this.r      // Refers to the PlaneCircle field
super.r     // Refers to the Circle field
```

Another way to refer to a shadowed field is to cast `this` (or any instance of the class) to the appropriate superclass and then access the field:

```
((Circle) this).r // Refers to field r of the Circle class
```

This casting technique is particularly useful when you need to refer to a shadowed field defined in a class that is not the immediate superclass. Suppose, for example, that classes `A`, `B`, and `C` all define a field named `x` and that `C` is a subclass of `B`, which is a subclass of `A`. Then, in the methods of class `C`, you can refer to these different fields as follows:

```
x           // Field x in class C
this.x      // Field x in class C
super.x     // Field x in class B
((B)this).x // Field x in class B
((A)this).x // Field x in class A
super.super.x // Illegal; does not refer to x in class A
```

You cannot refer to a shadowed field `x` in the superclass of a superclass with `super.super.x`. This is not legal syntax.

Similarly, if you have an instance `c` of class `C`, you can refer to the three fields named `x` like this:

```
c.x           // Field x of class C
((B)c).x      // Field x of class B
((A)c).x      // Field x of class A
```

So far, we've been discussing instance fields. Class fields can also be shadowed. You can use the same `super` syntax to refer to the shadowed value of the field, but this is never necessary since you can always refer to a class field by prepending the name of the desired class. Suppose that the implementer of `PlaneCircle` decides that the `Circle.PI` field does not express π to enough decimal places. She can define her own class field `PI`:

```
public static final double PI = 3.14159265358979323846;
```

Now, code in `PlaneCircle` can use this more accurate value with the expressions `PI` or `PlaneCircle.PI`. It can also refer to the old, less accurate value with the expressions `super.PI` and `Circle.PI`. Note, however, that the `area()` and `circumference()` methods inherited by `PlaneCircle` are defined in the `Circle` class, so they use the value `Circle.PI`, even though that value is shadowed now by `PlaneCircle.PI`.

3.4.6. Overriding Superclass Methods

When a class defines an instance method using the same name, return type, and parameters as a method in its superclass, that method *overrides* the method of the superclass. When the method is invoked for an object of the class, it is the new definition of the method that is called, not the superclass's old definition.

Method overriding is an important and useful technique in object-oriented programming. `PlaneCircle` does not override either of the methods defined by `Circle`, but suppose we define another subclass of `Circle`, named `Ellipse`.^[3] In this case, it is important for `Ellipse` to override the `area()` and `circumference()` methods of `Circle`, since the formulas used to compute the area and circumference of a circle do not work for ellipses.

[3]Mathematical purists may argue that since all circles are ellipses, `Ellipse` should be the superclass and `Circle` the subclass. A pragmatic engineer might counterargue that circles can be represented with fewer instance fields, so `Circle` objects should not be burdened by inheriting unnecessary fields from `Ellipse`. In any case, this is a useful example here.

The upcoming discussion of method overriding considers only instance methods. Class methods behave quite differently, and there isn't much to say. Like fields, class methods can be shadowed by a subclass, but not overridden. As I noted earlier in this chapter, it is good programming style to always prefix a class method invocation with the name of the class in which it is defined. If you consider the class name part of the class method name, the two methods have different names, so nothing is actually shadowed at all. It is, however, illegal for a class method to shadow an instance method.

Before we go any further with the discussion of method overriding, you need to be sure you understand the difference between method overriding and method overloading. As we discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#), method overloading refers to the practice of defining multiple methods (in the same class) that have the same name, but different parameter lists. This is very different from method overriding, so don't get them confused.

3.4.6.1. Overriding is not shadowing

Although Java treats the fields and methods of a class analogously in many ways, method overriding is not like field shadowing at all. You can refer to shadowed fields simply by casting an object to an instance of the appropriate superclass, but you cannot invoke overridden instance methods with this technique. The following code illustrates this crucial difference:

```
class A {                                // Define a class named A
    int i = 1;                           // An instance field
    int f() { return i; }                // An instance method
    static char g() { return 'A'; }      // A class method
}

class B extends A {                     // Define a subclass of A
    int i = 2;                           // Shadows field i in class A
    int f() { return -i; }               // Overrides instance method f in class A
    static char g() { return 'B'; }      // Shadows class method g() in class A
}

public class OverrideTest {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B b = new B();                  // Creates a new object of type B
        System.out.println(b.i);         // Refers to B.i; prints 2
        System.out.println(b.f());        // Refers to B.f(); prints -2
        System.out.println(b.g());        // Refers to B.g(); prints B
        System.out.println(B.g());        // This is a better way to invoke B.g()

        A a = (A) b;                    // Casts b to an instance of class A
        System.out.println(a.i);          // Now refers to A.i; prints 1
        System.out.println(a.f());         // Still refers to B.f(); prints -2
        System.out.println(a.g());         // Refers to A.g(); prints A
        System.out.println(A.g());         // This is a better way to invoke A.g()
    }
}
```

While this difference between method overriding and field shadowing may seem surprising at first, a little thought makes the purpose clear. Suppose we have a bunch of `Circle` and `Ellipse` objects we are manipulating. To keep track of the circles and ellipses, we store them in an array of type `Circle[]`. (We can do this because `Ellipse` is a subclass of `Circle`, so all `Ellipse` objects are legal `Circle` objects.) When we loop through the elements of this array, we don't have to know or care whether the element is actually a `Circle` or an `Ellipse`. What we do care about very much, however, is that the correct value is computed when we invoke the `area()` method of any element of the array. In other words, we don't want to use the formula for the area of a circle when the object is actually an ellipse! Seen in this context, it is not surprising at all that method overriding is handled differently by Java than field shadowing.

3.4.6.2. Dynamic method lookup

If we have a `Circle[]` array that holds `Circle` and `Ellipse` objects, how does the compiler know whether to call the `area()` method of the `Circle` class or the `Ellipse` class for any given item in the array? In fact, the compiler does not know this because it cannot know it. The compiler knows that it does not know, however, and produces code that uses dynamic method lookup at runtime. When the interpreter runs the code, it looks up the appropriate `area()` method to call for each of the objects in the array. That is, when the interpreter interprets the expression `o.area()`, it checks the actual type of the object referred to by the variable `o` and then finds the `area()` method that is appropriate for that type. It does

not simply use the `area()` method that is statically associated with the type of the variable `o`. This process of dynamic method lookup is sometimes also called virtual method invocation.[\[4\]](#)

[4] C++ programmers should note that dynamic method lookup is what C++ does for virtual functions. An important difference between Java and C++ is that Java does not have a `virtual` keyword. In Java, methods are virtual by default.

3.4.6.3. Final methods and static method lookup

Virtual method invocation is fast, but method invocation is faster when no dynamic lookup is necessary at runtime. Fortunately, there are a number of situations in which Java does not need to use dynamic method lookup. In particular, if a method is declared with the `final` modifier, it means that the method definition is the final one; it cannot be overridden by any subclasses. If a method cannot be overridden, the compiler knows that there is only one version of the method, and dynamic method lookup is not necessary.[\[5\]](#) In addition, all methods of a `final` class are themselves implicitly final and cannot be overridden. As we'll discuss later in this chapter, `private` methods are not inherited by subclasses and, therefore, cannot be overridden (i.e., all `private` methods are implicitly `final`). Finally, class methods behave like fields (i.e., they can be shadowed by subclasses but not overridden). Taken together, this means that all methods of a class that is declared `final`, as well as all methods that are `final`, `private`, or `static`, are invoked without dynamic method lookup. These methods are also candidates for inlining at runtime by a just-in-time compiler (JIT) or similar optimization tool.

[5] In this sense, the `final` modifier is the opposite of the `virtual` modifier in C++. All non-`final` methods in Java are `virtual`.

3.4.6.4. Invoking an overridden method

We've seen the important differences between method overriding and field shadowing. Nevertheless, the Java syntax for invoking an overridden method is quite similar to the syntax for accessing a shadowed field: both use the `super` keyword. The following code illustrates:

```
class A {
    int i = 1;                // An instance field shadowed by subclass B
    int f() { return i; }     // An instance method overridden by subclass B
}
class B extends A {
    int i;                    // This field shadows i in A
    int f() {                 // This method overrides f() in A
        i = super.i + 1;     // It can retrieve A.i like this
        return super.f() + i; // It can invoke A.f() like this
    }
}
```

Recall that when you use `super` to refer to a shadowed field, it is the same as casting `this` to the superclass type and accessing the field through that. Using `super` to invoke an overridden method, however, is not the same as casting `this`. In other words, in the previous code, the expression `super.f()` is not the same as `((A) this).f()`.

When the interpreter invokes an instance method with this `super` syntax, a modified form of dynamic method lookup is performed. The first step, as in regular dynamic method lookup, is to determine the actual class of the object through which the method is invoked. Normally, the dynamic search for an appropriate method definition would begin with this class.

When a method is invoked with the `super` syntax, however, the search begins at the superclass of the class. If the superclass implements the method directly, that version of the method is invoked. If the superclass inherits the method, the inherited version of the method is invoked.

Note that the `super` keyword invokes the most immediately overridden version of a method. Suppose class `A` has a subclass `B` that has a subclass `C`, and all three classes define the same method `f()`. Then the method `C.f()` can invoke the method `B.f()`, which it overrides directly, with `super.f()`. But there is no way for `C.f()` to invoke `A.f()` directly: `super.super.f()` is not legal Java syntax. Of course, if `C.f()` invokes `B.f()`, it is reasonable to suppose that `B.f()` might also invoke `A.f()`. This kind of chaining is relatively common when working with overridden methods: it is a way of augmenting the behavior of a method without replacing the method entirely. We saw this technique in the `finalize()` method shown earlier in the chapter: that method invoked `super.finalize()` to run its superclass finalization method.

Don't confuse the use of `super` to invoke an overridden method with the `super()` method call used in constructor methods to invoke a superclass constructor. Although they both use the same keyword, these are two entirely different syntaxes. In particular, you can use `super` to invoke an overridden method anywhere in the overriding method, while you can use `super()` only to invoke a superclass constructor as the very first statement of a constructor.

It is also important to remember that `super` can be used only to invoke an overridden method from within the method that overrides it. Given an `Ellipse` object `e`, there is no way for a program that uses an object (with or without the `super` syntax) to invoke the `area()` method defined by the `Circle` class on this object.

I've already explained that class methods can shadow class methods in superclasses, but cannot override them. The preferred way to invoke class methods is to include the name of the class in the invocation. If you do not do this, however, you can use the `super` syntax to invoke a shadowed class method, just as you would invoke an instance method or refer to a shadowed field.

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3.5. Data Hiding and Encapsulation

We started this chapter by describing a class as "a collection of data and methods." One of the important object-oriented techniques we haven't discussed so far is hiding the data within the class and making it available only through the methods. This technique is known as *encapsulation* because it seals the data (and internal methods) safely inside the "capsule" of the class, where it can be accessed only by trusted users (i.e., by the methods of the class).

Why would you want to do this? The most important reason is to hide the internal implementation details of your class. If you prevent programmers from relying on those details, you can safely modify the implementation without worrying that you will break existing code that uses the class.

Another reason for encapsulation is to protect your class against accidental or willful stupidity. A class often contains a number of interdependent fields that must be in a consistent state. If you allow a programmer (including yourself) to manipulate those fields directly, he may change one field without changing important related fields, thus leaving the class in an inconsistent state. If, instead, he has to call a method to change the field, that method can be sure to do everything necessary to keep the state consistent. Similarly, if a class defines certain methods for internal use only, hiding these methods prevents users of the class from calling them.

Here's another way to think about encapsulation: when all the data for a class is hidden, the methods define the only possible operations that can be performed on objects of that class. Once you have carefully tested and debugged your methods, you can be confident that the class will work as expected. On the other hand, if all the fields of the class can be directly manipulated, the number of possibilities you have to test becomes unmanageable.

There are other reasons to hide fields and methods of a class, as well:

- Internal fields and methods that are visible outside the class just clutter up the API. Keeping visible fields to a minimum keeps your class tidy and therefore easier to use and understand.
- If a field or method is visible to the users of your class, you have to document it. Save yourself time and effort by hiding it instead.

3.5.1. Access Control

All the fields and methods of a class can always be used within the body of the class itself. Java defines access control rules that restrict members of a class from being used outside the class. In a number of examples in this chapter, you've seen the `public` modifier used in field and method declarations. This `public` keyword, along with `protected` and `private`, are *accesscontrolmodifiers*; they specify the access rules for the field or method.

3.5.1.1. Access to packages

A package is always accessible to code defined within the package. Whether it is accessible to code from other packages depends on the way the package is deployed on the host system. When the class files that comprise a package are stored in a directory, for example, a user must have read access to the directory and the files within it in order to have access to the package. Package access is not part of the Java language itself. Access control is usually done at the level of classes and members of classes instead.

3.5.1.2. Access to classes

By default, top-level classes are accessible within the package in which they are defined. However, if a top-level class is declared `public`, it is accessible everywhere (or everywhere that the package itself is accessible). The reason that we've restricted these statements to top-level classes is that, as we'll see later in this chapter, classes can also be defined as members of other classes. Because these inner classes are members of a class, they obey the member access-control rules.

3.5.1.3. Access to members

As I've already said, the members of a class are always accessible within the body of the class. By default, members are also accessible throughout the package in which the class is defined. This implies that classes placed in the same package should trust each other with their internal implementation details.[\[6\]](#) This default level of access is often called *package access*. It is only one of four possible levels of access. The other three levels of access are defined by the `public`, `protected`, and `private` modifiers. Here is some example code that uses these modifiers:

[6]C++ programmers might say that all classes within a package are *friend-ly* to each other.

```
public class Laundromat {           // People can use this class.
    private Laundry[] dirty;        // They cannot use this internal field,
    public void wash() { ... }      // but they can use these public methods
    public void dry() { ... }       // to manipulate the internal field.
}
```

Here are the access rules that apply to members of a class:

- If a member of a class is declared with the `public` modifier, it means that the member is accessible anywhere the containing class is accessible. This is the least restrictive type of access control.
- If a member of a class is declared `private`, the member is never accessible, except within the class itself. This is the most restrictive type of access control.
- If a member of a class is declared `protected`, it is accessible to all classes within the package (the same as the default package accessibility) and also accessible within the body of any subclass of the class, regardless of the package in which that subclass is defined. This is more restrictive than `public` access, but less restrictive than package access.
- If a member of a class is not declared with any of these modifiers, it has the default package access: it is accessible to code within all classes that are defined in the same package, but inaccessible outside of the package.

protected access requires a little more elaboration. Suppose that the field `r` of our `Circle` class had been declared protected and that our `PlaneCircle` class had been defined in a different package. In this case, every `PlaneCircle` object inherits the field `r`, and the `PlaneCircle` code can use that field as it currently does. Now suppose that `PlaneCircle` defines the following method to compare the size of a `PlaneCircle` object to the size of some other `Circle` object:

```
// Return true if this object is bigger than the specified circle
public boolean isBigger(Circle c) {
    return (this.r > c.r); // If r is protected, c.r is illegal access!
}
```

In this scenario, this method does not compile. The expression `this.r` is perfectly legal, since it accesses a protected field inherited by `PlaneCircle`. Accessing `c.r` is not legal, however, since it is attempting to access a protected field it does not inherit. To make this method legal, we either have to declare `PlaneCircle` in the same package as `Circle` or change the type of the `isBigger()` parameter to be a `PlaneCircle` instead of a `Circle`.

3.5.1.4. Access control and inheritance

The Java specification states that a subclass inherits all the instance fields and instance methods of its superclass accessible to it. If the subclass is defined in the same package as the superclass, it inherits all non-`private` instance fields and methods. If the subclass is defined in a different package, however, it inherits all `protected` and `public` instance fields and methods. `private` fields and methods are never inherited; neither are class fields or class methods. Finally, constructors are not inherited; they are chained, as described earlier in this chapter.

The statement that a subclass does not inherit the inaccessible fields and methods of its superclass can be a confusing one. It would seem to imply that when you create an instance of a subclass, no memory is allocated for any `private` fields defined by the superclass. This is not the intent of the statement, however. Every instance of a subclass does, in fact, include a complete instance of the superclass within it, including all inaccessible fields and methods. It is simply a matter of terminology. Because the inaccessible fields cannot be used in the subclass, we say they are not inherited. I stated earlier in this section that the members of a class are always accessible within the body of the class. If this statement is to apply to all members of the class, including inherited members, then we have to define "inherited members" to include only those members that are accessible. If you don't care for this definition, you can think of it this way instead:

- A class inherits *all* instance fields and instance methods (but not constructors) of its superclass.
- The body of a class can always access all the fields and methods it declares itself. It can also access the *accessible* fields and members it inherits from its superclass.

3.5.1.5. Member access summary

[Table 3-1](#) summarizes the member access rules.

Table 3-1. Class Member Accessibility

Member Visibility

Accessible to:	public	protected	package	private
Defining class	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class in same package	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Subclass in different package	Yes	Yes	No	No
Non-subclass different package	Yes	No	No	No

Here are some simple rules of thumb for using visibility modifiers:

- Use `public` only for methods and constants that form part of the public API of the class. Certain important or frequently used fields can also be `public`, but it is common practice to make fields `non-public` and encapsulate them with `public` accessor methods.
- Use `protected` for fields and methods that aren't required by most programmers using the class, but that may be of interest to anyone creating a subclass as part of a different package. Note that `protected` members are technically part of the exported API of a class. They should be documented and cannot be changed without potentially breaking code that relies on them.
- Use the default package visibility for fields and methods that are internal implementation details, but are used by cooperating classes in the same package. You cannot take real advantage of package visibility unless you use the `package` directive to group your cooperating classes into a package.
- Use `private` for fields and methods that are used only inside the class and should be hidden everywhere else.

If you are not sure whether to use `protected`, `package`, or `private` accessibility, it is better to start with overly restrictive member access. You can always relax the access restrictions in future versions of your class, if necessary. Doing the reverse is not a good idea because increasing access restrictions is not a backwards-compatible change.

3.5.2. Data Accessor Methods

In the `Circle` example we've been using, we've declared the circle radius to be a `public` field. The `Circle` class is one in which it may well be reasonable to keep that field publicly accessible; it is a simple enough class, with no dependencies between its fields. On the other hand, our current implementation of the class allows a `Circle` object to have a negative radius, and circles with negative radii should simply not exist. As long as the radius is stored in a `public` field, however, any programmer can set the field to any value she wants, no matter how unreasonable. The only solution is to restrict the programmer's direct access to the field and define `public` methods that provide indirect access to the field. Providing `public` methods to read and write a field is not the same as making the field itself `public`. The crucial difference is that methods can perform error checking.

[Example 3-4](#) shows how we might reimplement `Circle` to prevent circles with negative radii. This version of `Circle` declares the `r` field to be `protected` and defines accessor methods named `getRadius()` and `setRadius()` to read and write the field value while enforcing the restriction on negative radius values. Because the `r` field is `protected`, it is directly (and more efficiently) accessible to subclasses.

Example 3-4. The Circle Class Using Data Hiding and Encapsulation

```

package shapes;                // Specify a package for the class

public class Circle {          // The class is still public
    // This is a generally useful constant, so we keep it public
    public static final double PI = 3.14159;

    protected double r;        // Radius is hidden, but visible to subclasses

    // A method to enforce the restriction on the radius
    // This is an implementation detail that may be of interest to subclasses
    protected checkRadius(double radius) {
        if (radius < 0.0)
            throw new IllegalArgumentException("radius may not be negative.");
    }

    // The constructor method
    public Circle(double r) {
        checkRadius(r);
        this.r = r;
    }

    // Public data accessor methods
    public double getRadius() { return r; };
    public void setRadius(double r) {
        checkRadius(r);
        this.r = r;
    }

    // Methods to operate on the instance field
    public double area() { return PI * r * r; }
    public double circumference() { return 2 * PI * r; }
}

```

We have defined the `Circle` class within a package named `shapes`. Since `r` is protected, any other classes in the `shapes` package have direct access to that field and can set it however they like. The assumption here is that all classes within the `shapes` package were written by the same author or a closely cooperating group of authors, and that the classes all trust each other not to abuse their privileged level of access to each other's implementation details.

Finally, the code that enforces the restriction against negative radius values is itself placed within a protected method, `checkRadius()`. Although users of the `Circle` class cannot call this method, subclasses of the class can call it and even override it if they want to change the restrictions on the radius.

Note particularly the `getRadius()` and `setRadius()` methods of [Example 3-4](#). It is almost universal in Java that data accessor methods begin with the prefixes "get" and "set." If the field being accessed is of type `boolean`, however, the `get()` method may be replaced with an equivalent method that begins with "is." For example, the accessor method for a `boolean` field named `readable` is typically called `isReadable()` instead of `getReadable()`. In the programming conventions of the JavaBeans component model (covered in [Chapter 6, "JavaBeans"](#)), a hidden field with one or more data accessor methods whose names begin with "get," "is," or "set" is called a *property*. An interesting way to study a complex class is to look at the set of properties it defines. Properties

are particularly common in the AWT and Swing APIs, which are covered in *Java Foundation Classes in a Nutshell* (O'Reilly).

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3.6. Abstract Classes and
Methods

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3.6. Abstract Classes and Methods

In [Example 3-4](#), we declared our `Circle` class to be part of a package named `shapes`. Suppose we plan to implement a number of shape classes: `Rectangle`, `Square`, `Ellipse`, `Triangle`, and so on. We can give these shape classes our two basic `area()` and `circumference()` methods. Now, to make it easy to work with an array of shapes, it would be helpful if all our shape classes had a common superclass, `Shape`. If we structure our class hierarchy this way, every shape object, regardless of the actual type of shape it represents, can be assigned to variables, fields, or array elements of type `Shape`. We want the `Shape` class to encapsulate whatever features all our shapes have in common (e.g., the `area()` and `circumference()` methods). But our generic `Shape` class doesn't represent any real kind of shape, so it cannot define useful implementations of the methods. Java handles this situation with *abstract methods*.

Java lets us define a method without implementing it by declaring the method with the `abstract` modifier. An abstract method has no body; it simply has a signature definition followed by a semicolon.[\[7\]](#) Here are the rules about abstract methods and the abstract classes that contain them:

[7] An abstract method in Java is something like a pure virtual function in C++ (i.e., a virtual function that is declared `= 0`). In C++, a class that contains a pure virtual function is called an abstract class and cannot be instantiated. The same is true of Java classes that contain abstract methods.

- Any class with an abstract method is automatically abstract itself and must be declared as such.
- An abstract class cannot be instantiated.
- A subclass of an abstract class can be instantiated only if it overrides each of the abstract methods of its superclass and provides an implementation (i.e., a method body) for all of them. Such a class is often called a *concrete* subclass, to emphasize the fact that it is not abstract.
- If a subclass of an abstract class does not implement all the abstract methods it inherits, that subclass is itself abstract.
- `static`, `private`, and `final` methods cannot be abstract, since these types of methods cannot be overridden by a subclass. Similarly, a `final` class cannot contain any abstract methods.
- A class can be declared abstract even if it does not actually have any abstract methods. Declaring such a class abstract indicates that the implementation is somehow incomplete and is meant to serve as a superclass for one or more subclasses that will complete the implementation. Such a class cannot be instantiated.

There is an important feature of the rules of abstract methods. If we define the `Shape` class to have `abstract area()` and `abstract circumference()` methods, any subclass of `Shape` is required to provide implementations of these methods so it can be instantiated. In other words, every `Shape` object is guaranteed to have

implementations of these methods defined. [Example 3-5](#) shows how this might work. It defines an `abstractShape` class and two concrete subclasses of it.

Example 3-5. An Abstract Class and Concrete Subclasses

```
public abstract class Shape {
    public abstract double area();           // Abstract methods: note
    public abstract double circumference();  // semicolon instead of body.
}

class Circle extends Shape {
    public static final double PI = 3.14159265358979323846;
    protected double r;                     // Instance data
    public Circle(double r) { this.r = r; }  // Constructor
    public double getRadius() { return r; }   // Accessor
    public double area() { return PI*r*r; }   // Implementations of
    public double circumference() { return 2*PI*r; } // abstract methods.
}

class Rectangle extends Shape {
    protected double w, h;                  // Instance data
    public Rectangle(double w, double h) {   // Constructor
        this.w = w; this.h = h;
    }
    public double getWidth() { return w; }   // Accessor method
    public double getHeight() { return h; }  // Another accessor
    public double area() { return w*h; }     // Implementations of
    public double circumference() { return 2*(w + h); } // abstract methods.
}
```

Each abstract method in `Shape` has a semicolon right after its parentheses. There are no curly braces, and no method body is defined. Using the classes defined in [Example 3-5](#), we can now write code like this:

```
Shape[] shapes = new Shape[3];             // Create an array to hold shapes
shapes[0] = new Circle(2.0);                 // Fill in the array
shapes[1] = new Rectangle(1.0, 3.0);
shapes[2] = new Rectangle(4.0, 2.0);

double total_area = 0;
for(int i = 0; i < shapes.length; i++)
    total_area += shapes[i].area();         // Compute the area of the shapes
```

There are two important points to notice here:

- Subclasses of `Shape` can be assigned to elements of an array of `Shape`. No cast is necessary. This is another example of a widening reference type conversion (discussed in [Chapter 2, "Java Syntax from the Ground Up"](#)).
- You can invoke the `area()` and `circumference()` methods for any `Shape` object, even though the `Shape` class does not define a body for these methods. When you do this, the method to be invoked is found using

dynamic method lookup, so the area of a circle is computed using the method defined by `Circle`, and the area of a rectangle is computed using the method defined by `Rectangle`.

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3.7. Interfaces

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3.7. Interfaces

Let's extend our `shapes` package further. Suppose we now want to implement a number of shapes that not only know their sizes, but also know the position of their center point in the Cartesian coordinate plane. One way to do this is to define an abstract `CenteredShape` class and then implement various subclasses of it, such as `CenteredCircle`, `CenteredRectangle`, and so on.

But we also want these positionable shape classes to support the `area()` and `circumference()` methods we've already defined, without reimplementing these methods. So, for example, we'd like to define `CenteredCircle` as a subclass of `Circle`, so that it inherits `area()` and `circumference()`. But a class in Java can have only one immediate superclass. If `CenteredCircle` extends `Circle`, it cannot also extend the abstract `CenteredShape` class![\[8\]](#)

[8]C++ allows classes to have more than one superclass, using a technique known as multiple inheritance. Multiple inheritance adds a lot of complexity to a language; Java supports what many believe is a more elegant solution.

Java's solution to this problem is called an interface. Although a Java class can extend only a single superclass, it can *implement* any number of interfaces.

3.7.1. Defining an Interface

An interface is a reference type that is closely related to a class. Almost everything you've read so far in this book about classes applies equally to interfaces. Defining an interface is a lot like defining an abstract class, except that the keywords `abstract` and `class` are replaced with the keyword `interface`. When you define an interface, you are creating a new reference type, just as you are when you define a class. As its name implies, an *interface* specifies an interface, or API, for certain functionality. It does not define any implementation of that API, however. There are a number of restrictions that apply to the members of an interface:

- An interface contains no implementation whatsoever. All methods of an interface are implicitly `abstract`, even if the `abstract` modifier is omitted. Interface methods have no implementation; a semicolon appears in place of the method body. Because interfaces can contain only `abstract` methods, and class methods cannot be `abstract`, the methods of an interface must all be instance methods.
- An interface defines a public API. All methods of an interface are implicitly `public`, even if the `public` modifier is omitted. It is an error to define a `protected` or `private` method in an interface.
- Although a class defines data and methods that operate on that data, an interface cannot define instance fields. Fields are an implementation detail, and an interface is a pure specification without any implementation. The only fields allowed in an interface definition are constants that are declared both `static` and `final`.

- An interface cannot be instantiated, so it does not define a constructor.

[Example 3-6](#) shows the definition of an interface named `Centered`. This interface defines the methods a `Shape` subclass should implement if it knows the x,y coordinate of its center point.

Example 3-6. An Interface Definition

```
public interface Centered {
    public void setCenter(double x, double y);
    public double getCenterX();
    public double getCenterY();
}
```

3.7.2. Implementing an Interface

Just as a class uses `extends` to specify its superclass, it can use `implements` to name one or more interfaces it supports. `implements` is a Java keyword that can appear in a class declaration following the `extends` clause. `implements` should be followed by the name or names of the interface(s) the class implements, with multiple names separated by commas.

When a class declares an interface in its `implements` clause, it is saying that it provides an implementation (i.e., a body) for each method of that interface. If a class implements an interface but does not provide an implementation for every interface method, it inherits those unimplemented abstract methods from the interface and must itself be declared `abstract`. If a class implements more than one interface, it must implement every method of each interface it implements (or be declared `abstract`).

[Example 3-7](#) shows how we can define a `CenteredRectangle` class that extends our `Rectangle` class and implements the `Centered` interface we defined in [Example 3-6](#).

Example 3-7. Implementing an Interface

```
public class CenteredRectangle extends Rectangle implements Centered {
    // New instance fields
    private double cx, cy;

    // A constructor
    public CenteredRectangle(double cx, double cy, double w, double h) {
        super(w, h);
        this.cx = cx;
        this.cy = cy;
    }

    // We inherit all the methods of Rectangle, but must
    // provide implementations of all the Centered methods.
    public void setCenter(double x, double y) { cx = x; cy = y; }
    public double getCenterX() { return cx; }
    public double getCenterY() { return cy; }
}
```

As I noted earlier, constants can appear in an interface definition. Any class that implements the interface inherits the constants and can use them as if they were defined directly in the class. There is no need to prefix them with the name of the interface or provide any kind of implementation of the constants. When you have a set of constants used by more than one class (e.g., a port number and other protocol constants used by a client and server), it can be convenient to define the necessary constants in an interface that contains no methods. Then, any class that wants to use those constants needs only to declare that it implements the interface. `java.io.ObjectStreamConstants` is just such an interface.

3.7.3. Using Interfaces

Suppose we implement `CenteredCircle` and `CenteredSquare` just as we implemented `CenteredRectangle` in [Example 3-7](#). Since each class extends `Shape`, instances of the classes can be treated as instances of the `Shape` class, as we saw earlier. Since each class implements `Centered`, instances can also be treated as instances of that type. The following code demonstrates both techniques:

```
Shape[] shapes = new Shape[3];           // Create an array to hold shapes

// Create some centered shapes, and store them in the Shape[]
// No cast necessary: these are all widening conversions
shapes[0] = new CenteredCircle(1.0, 1.0, 1.0);
shapes[1] = new CenteredSquare(2.5, 2, 3);
shapes[2] = new CenteredRectangle(2.3, 4.5, 3, 4);

// Compute average area of the shapes and average distance from the origin
double totalArea = 0;
double totalDistance;
for(int i = 0; i < shapes.length; i++) {
    totalArea += shapes[i].area();        // Compute the area of the shapes
    if (shapes[i] instanceof Centered) { // The shape is a Centered shape
        // Note the required cast from Shape to Centered (no cast
        // would be required to go from CenteredSquare to Centered, however).
        Centered c = (Centered) shapes[i]; // Assign it to a Centered variable
        double cx = c.getCenterX();        // Get coordinates of the center
        double cy = c.getCenterY();        // Compute distance from origin
        totalDistance += Math.sqrt(cx*cx + cy*cy);
    }
}
System.out.println("Average area: " + totalArea/shapes.length);
System.out.println("Average distance: " + totalDistance/shapes.length);
```

This example demonstrates that interfaces are data types in Java, just like classes. When a class implements an interface, instances of that class can be assigned to variables of the interface type. Don't interpret this example, however, to imply that you must assign a `CenteredRectangle` object to a `Centered` variable before you can invoke the `setCenter()` method or to a `Shape` variable before you can invoke the `area()` method. `CenteredRectangle` defines `setCenter()` and inherits `area()` from its `Rectangle` superclass, so you can always invoke these methods.

3.7.4. When to Use Interfaces

When defining an abstract type (e.g., `Shape`) that you expect to have many sub-types (e.g., `Circle`, `Rectangle`, `Square`), you are often faced with a choice between interfaces and abstract classes. Since they have similar features, it is

not always clear when to use one over the other.

An interface is useful because any class can implement it, even if that class extends some entirely unrelated superclass. But an interface is a pure API specification and contains no implementation. If an interface has numerous methods, it can become tedious to implement the methods over and over, especially when much of the implementation is duplicated by each implementing class.

On the other hand, a class that extends an abstract class cannot extend any other class, which can cause design difficulties in some situations. However, an abstract class does not need to be entirely abstract; it can contain a partial implementation that subclasses can take advantage of. In some cases, numerous subclasses can rely on default method implementations provided by an abstract class.

Another important difference between interfaces and abstract classes has to do with compatibility. If you define an interface as part of a public API and then later add a new method to the interface, you break any classes that implemented the previous version of the interface. If you use an abstract class, however, you can safely add nonabstract methods to that class without requiring modifications to existing classes that extend the abstract class.

In some situations, it will be clear that an interface or an abstract class is the right design choice. In other cases, a common design pattern is to use both. First, define the type as a totally abstract interface. Then create an abstract class that implements the interface and provides useful default implementations subclasses can take advantage of. For example:

```
// Here is a basic interface. It represents a shape that fits inside
// of a rectangular bounding box. Any class that wants to serve as a
// RectangularShape can implement these methods from scratch.
public interface RectangularShape {
    public void setSize(double width, double height);
    public void setPosition(double x, double y);
    public void translate(double dx, double dy);
    public double area();
    public boolean isInside();
}

// Here is a partial implementation of that interface. Many
// implementations may find this a useful starting point.
public abstract class AbstractRectangularShape implements RectangularShape {
    // The position and size of the shape
    protected double x, y, w, h;

    // Default implementations of some of the interface methods
    public void setSize(double width, double height) { w = width; h = height; }
    public void setPosition(double x, double y) { this.x = x; this.y = y; }
    public void translate (double dx, double dy) { x += dx; y += dy; }
}
```

3.7.5. Implementing Multiple Interfaces

Suppose we want shape objects that can be positioned in terms of not only their center points, but also their upper-left corners. And suppose we also want shapes that can be scaled larger and smaller. Remember that although a class can extend only a single superclass, it can implement any number of interfaces. Assuming we have defined appropriate

UpperRightCornered and Scalable interfaces, we can declare a class as follows:

```
public class SuperDuperSquare extends Shape
    implements Centered, UpperRightCornered, Scalable {
    // class members omitted here.
}
```

When a class implements more than one interface, it simply means that it must provide implementations for all abstract methods in all its interfaces.

3.7.6. Extending Interfaces

Interfaces can have subinterfaces, just as classes can have subclasses. A subinterface inherits all the abstract methods and constants of its superinterface and can define new abstract methods and constants. Interfaces are different from classes in one very important way, however: an interface can have an `extends` clause that lists more than one superinterface. For example, here are some interfaces that extend other interfaces:

```
public interface Positionable extends Centered {
    public setUpperRightCorner(double x, double y);
    public double getUpperRightX();
    public double getUpperRightY();
}
public interface Transformable extends Scalable, Translatable, Rotatable {}
public interface SuperShape implements Positionable, Transformable {}
```

An interface that extends more than one interface inherits all the abstract methods and constants from each of those interfaces and can define its own additional abstract methods and constants. A class that implements such an interface must implement the abstract methods defined directly by the interface, as well as all the abstract methods inherited from all the superinterfaces.

3.7.7. Marker Interfaces

Sometimes it is useful to define an interface that is entirely empty. A class can implement this interface simply by naming it in its `implements` clause without having to implement any methods. In this case, any instances of the class become valid instances of the interface. Java code can check whether an object is an instance of the interface using the `instanceof` operator, so this technique is a useful way to provide additional information about an object. The `Cloneable` interface in `java.lang` is an example of this type of *marker interface*. It defines no methods, but identifies the class as one that allows its internal state to be cloned by the `clone()` method of the `Object` class. As of Java 1.1, `java.io.Serializable` is another such marker interface. Given an arbitrary object, you can determine whether it has a working `clone()` method with code like this:

```
Object o;        // Initialized elsewhere
Object copy;
if (o instanceof Cloneable) copy = o.clone();
else copy = null;
```

3.8. Inner Class Overview

The classes and interfaces we have seen so far in this chapter have all been top-level classes (i.e., they are direct members of packages, not nested within any other classes). Starting in Java 1.1, however, there are four other types of classes, loosely known as *inner classes*, that can be defined in a Java program. Used correctly, inner classes are an elegant and powerful feature of the Java language. These four types of classes are summarized here:

Static member classes

A static member class is a class (or interface) defined as a `static` member of another class. A `static` method is called a class method, so, by analogy, we could call this type of inner class a "class class," but this terminology would obviously be confusing. A static member class behaves much like an ordinary top-level class, except that it can access the `static` members of the class that contains it. Interfaces can be defined as static members of classes.

Member classes

A member class is also defined as a member of an enclosing class, but is not declared with the `static` modifier. This type of inner class is analogous to an instance method or field. An instance of a member class is always associated with an instance of the enclosing class, and the code of a member class has access to all the fields and methods (both `static` and `non-static`) of its enclosing class. There are several features of Java syntax that exist specifically to work with the enclosing instance of a member class. Interfaces can only be defined as static members of a class, not as `non-static` members.

Local classes

A local class is a class defined within a block of Java code. Like a local variable, a local class is visible only within that block. Although local classes are not member classes, they are still defined within an enclosing class, so they share many of the features of member classes. Additionally, however, a local class can access any `final` local variables or parameters that are accessible in the scope of the block that defines the class. Interfaces cannot be defined locally.

Anonymous classes

An anonymous class is a kind of local class that has no name; it combines the syntax for class definition with the syntax for object instantiation. While a local class definition is a Java statement, an anonymous class definition (and instantiation) is a Java expression, so it can appear as part of a larger expression, such as method invocation. Interfaces cannot be defined anonymously.

Java programmers have not reached a consensus on the appropriate names for the various kinds of inner classes. Thus, you may find them referred to by different names in different situations. In particular, static member classes are sometimes called "nested top-level" classes, and the term "nested classes" may refer to all types of inner classes. The term "inner classes" is itself overloaded and sometimes refers specifically to member classes. On other occasions, "inner classes" refers to member classes, local classes, and anonymous classes, but not static member classes. In this book, I use "inner class" to mean any class other than a standard top-level class and the names shown previously to refer to the individual types of inner classes.

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3.9. Static Member Classes

A *static member class* (or interface) is much like a regular top-level class (or interface). For convenience, however, it is nested within another class or interface. [Example 3-8](#) shows a helper interface defined as a static member of a containing class. The example also shows how this interface is used both within the class that contains it and by external classes. Note the use of its hierarchical name in the external class.

Example 3-8. Defining and Using a Static Member Interface

```
// A class that implements a stack as a linked list
public class LinkedStack {
    // This static member interface defines how objects are linked
    public static interface Linkable {
        public Linkable getNext();
        public void setNext(Linkable node);
    }

    // The head of the list is a Linkable object
    Linkable head;

    // Method bodies omitted
    public void push(Linkable node) { ... }
    public Object pop() { ... }
}

// This class implements the static member interface
class LinkableInteger implements LinkedStack.Linkable {
    // Here's the node's data and constructor
    int i;
    public LinkableInteger(int i) { this.i = i; }

    // Here are the data and methods required to implement the interface
    LinkedStack.Linkable next;
    public LinkedStack.Linkable getNext() { return next; }
    public void setNext(LinkedStack.Linkable node) { next = node; }
}
```

3.9.1. Features of Static Member Classes

A static member class or interface is defined as a `static` member of a containing class, making it analogous to the class fields and methods that are also declared `static`. Like a class method, a static member class is not associated with any instance of the containing class (i.e., there is no `this` object). A static member class does, however, have access to all the `static` members (including any other static member classes and interfaces) of its containing class. A static member class can use any other static member without qualifying its name with the name of the containing class.

A static member class has access to all static members of its containing class, including `private` members. The reverse is true as well: the methods of the containing class have access to all members of a static member class, including the `private` members. A static member class even has access to all the members of any other static member classes, including the `private` members of those classes.

Since static member classes are themselves class members, a static member class can be declared with its own access control modifiers. These modifiers have the same meanings for static member classes as they do for other members of a class. In [Example 3-8](#), the `Linkable` interface is declared `public`, so it can be implemented by any class that is interested in being stored on a `LinkedStack`.

3.9.2. Restrictions on Static Member Classes

A static member class cannot have the same name as any of its enclosing classes. In addition, static member classes and interfaces can be defined only within top-level classes and other static member classes and interfaces. This is actually part of a larger prohibition against `static` members of any sort within member, local, and anonymous classes.

3.9.3. New Syntax for Static Member Classes

In code outside of the containing class, a static member class or interface is named by combining the name of the outer class with the name of the inner class (e.g., `LinkedStack.Linkable`). You can use the `import` directive to import a static member class:

```
import LinkedStack.Linkable;    // Import a specific inner class
import LinkedStack.*;           // Import all inner classes of LinkedStack
```

Importing inner classes is not recommended, however, because it obscures the fact that the inner class is tightly associated with its containing class.

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3.10. Member Classes

A *member class* is a class that is declared as a non-static member of a containing class. If a static member class is analogous to a class field or class method, a member class is analogous to an instance field or instance method.

[Example 3-9](#) shows how a member class can be defined and used. This example extends the previous `LinkedList` example to allow enumeration of the elements on the stack by defining an `enumerate()` method that returns an implementation of the `java.util.Enumeration` interface. The implementation of this interface is defined as a member class.

Example 3-9. An Enumeration Implemented as a Member Class

```
public class LinkedList {
    // Our static member interface; body omitted here...
    public static interface Linkable { ... }

    // The head of the list
    private Linkable head;

    // Method bodies omitted here
    public void push(Linkable node) { ... }
    public Linkable pop() { ... }

    // This method returns an Enumeration object for this LinkedList
    public java.util.Enumeration enumerate() { return new Enumerator(); }

    // Here is the implementation of the Enumeration interface,
    // defined as a member class.
    protected class Enumerator implements java.util.Enumeration {
        Linkable current;
        // The constructor uses the private head field of the containing class
    public Enumerator() { current = head; }
        public boolean hasMoreElements() { return (current != null); }
        public Object nextElement() {
            if (current == null) throw new java.util.NoSuchElementException();
            Object value = current;
            current = current.getNext();
            return value;
        }
    }
}
```

Notice how the `Enumerator` class is nested within the `LinkedList` class. Since `Enumerator` is a helper class used only within `LinkedList`, there is a real elegance to having it defined so close to where it is used by the containing class.

3.10.1. Features of Member Classes

Like instance fields and instance methods, every member class is associated with an instance of the class within which it is defined (i.e., every instance of a member class is associated with an instance of the containing class). This means that the code of a member class has access to all the instance fields and instance methods (as well as the static members) of the containing class, including any that are declared `private`.

This crucial feature is illustrated in [Example 3-9](#). Here is the body of the `LinkedList.Enumerator()` constructor again:

```
current = head;
```

This single line of code sets the `current` field of the inner class to the value of the `head` field of the containing class. The code works as shown, even though `head` is declared as a `private` field in the containing class.

A member class, like any member of a class, can be assigned one of three visibility levels: `public`, `protected`, or `private`. If none of these visibility modifiers is specified, the default package visibility is used. In [Example 3-9](#), the `Enumerator` class is declared `protected`, so it is inaccessible to code using the `LinkedList` class, but accessible to any class that subclasses `LinkedList`.

3.10.2. Restrictions on Member Classes

There are three important restrictions on member classes:

- A member class cannot have the same name as any containing class or package. This is an important rule, and one not shared by fields and methods.
- Member classes cannot contain any `static` fields, methods, or classes (with the exception of constant fields declared both `static` and `final`). `static` fields, methods, and classes are top-level constructs not associated with any particular object, while every member class is associated with an instance of its enclosing class. Defining a `static` top-level member within a non-top-level member class simply promotes confusion and bad programming style, so you are required to define all static members within a top-level or static member class or interface.
- Interfaces cannot be defined as member classes. An interface cannot be instantiated, so there is no object to associate with an instance of the enclosing class. If you declare an interface as a member of a class, the interface is implicitly `static`, making it a static member class.

3.10.3. New Syntax for Member Classes

The most important feature of a member class is that it can access the instance fields and methods in its containing

object. We saw this in the `LinkedList.Enumerator()` constructor of [Example 3-9](#):

```
public Enumerator() { current = head; }
```

In this example, `head` is a field of the `LinkedList` class, and we assign it to the `current` field of the `Enumerator` class. The current code works, but what if we want to make these references explicit? We could try code like this:

```
public Enumerator() { this.current = this.head; }
```

This code does not compile, however. `this.current` is fine; it is an explicit reference to the `current` field in the newly created `Enumerator` object. It is the `this.head` expression that causes the problem; it refers to a field named `head` in the `Enumerator` object. Since there is no such field, the compiler generates an error. To solve this problem, Java defines a special syntax for explicitly referring to the containing instance of the `this` object. Thus, if we want to be explicit in our constructor, we can use the following syntax:

```
public Enumerator() { this.current = LinkedList.this.head; }
```

The general syntax is `classname.this`, where *classname* is the name of a containing class. Note that member classes can themselves contain member classes, nested to any depth. Since no member class can have the same name as any containing class, however, the use of the enclosing class name prepended to `this` is a perfectly general way to refer to any containing instance. This syntax is needed only when referring to a member of a containing class that is hidden by a member of the same name in the member class.

3.10.3.1. Accessing superclass members of the containing class

When a class shadows or overrides a member of its superclass, you can use the keyword `super` to refer to the hidden member. This `super` syntax can be extended to work with member classes as well. On the rare occasion when you need to refer to a shadowed field `f` or an overridden method `m` of a superclass of a containing class `C`, use the following expressions:

```
C.super.f
C.super.m()
```

This syntax was not implemented by Java 1.1 compilers, but it works correctly as of Java 1.2.

3.10.3.2. Specifying the containing instance

As we've seen, every instance of a member class is associated with an instance of its containing class. Look again at our definition of the `enumerate()` method in [Example 3-9](#):

```
public Enumeration enumerate() { return new Enumerator(); }
```

When a member class constructor is invoked like this, the new instance of the member class is automatically associated with the `this` object. This is what you would expect to happen and exactly what you want to occur in most cases. Occasionally, however, you may want to specify the containing instance explicitly when instantiating a

member class. You can do this by preceding the new operator with a reference to the containing instance. Thus, the `enumerate()` method shown above is shorthand for the following:

```
public Enumeration enumerate() { return this.new Enumerator(); }
```

Let's pretend we didn't define an `enumerate()` method for `LinkedList`. In this case, the code to obtain an `Enumeration` object for a given `LinkedList` object might look like this:

```
LinkedList stack = new LinkedList();    // Create an empty stack
Enumeration e = stack.new Enumerator(); // Create an Enumeration for it
```

The containing instance implicitly specifies the name of the containing class; it is a syntax error to explicitly specify that containing class:

```
Enumeration e = stack.new LinkedList.Enumerator(); // Syntax error
```

There is one other special piece of Java syntax that specifies an enclosing instance for a member class explicitly. Before we consider it, however, let me point out that you should rarely, if ever, need to use this syntax. It is one of the pathological cases that snuck into the language along with all the elegant features of inner classes.

As strange as it may seem, it is possible for a top-level class to extend a member class. This means that the subclass does not have a containing instance, but its superclass does. When the subclass constructor invokes the superclass constructor, it must specify the containing instance. It does this by prepending the containing instance and a period to the `super` keyword. If we had not declared our `Enumerator` class to be a protected member of `LinkedList`, we could subclass it. Although it is not clear why we would want to do so, we could write code like the following:

```
// A top-level class that extends a member class
class SpecialEnumerator extends LinkedList.Enumerator {
    // The constructor must explicitly specify a containing instance
    // when invoking the superclass constructor.
    public SpecialEnumerator(LinkedList s) { s.super(); }
    // Rest of class omitted...
}
```

3.10.4. Scope Versus Inheritance for Member Classes

We've just noted that a top-level class can extend a member class. With the introduction of member classes, there are two separate hierarchies that must be considered for any class. The first is the *classhierarchy*, from superclass to subclass, that defines the fields and methods a member class inherits. The second is the *containmenthierarchy*, from containing class to contained class, that defines a set of fields and methods that are in the scope of (and are therefore accessible to) the member class.

The two hierarchies are entirely distinct from each other; it is important that you do not confuse them. This should not be a problem if you refrain from creating naming conflicts, where a field or method in a superclass has the same name as a field or method in a containing class. If such a naming conflict does arise, however, the inherited field or

method takes precedence over the field or method of the same name in the containing class. This behavior is logical: when a class inherits a field or method, that field or method effectively becomes part of that class. Therefore, inherited fields and methods are in the scope of the class that inherits them and take precedence over fields and methods by the same name in enclosing scopes.

Because this can be quite confusing, Java does not leave it to chance that you get it right. Whenever there is a naming conflict between an inherited field or method and a field or method in a containing class, Java requires that you *explicitly* specify which one you mean. For example, if a member class B inherits a field named `x` and is contained within a class A that also defines a field named `x`, you must use `this.x` to specify the inherited field and `A.this.x` to specify the field in the containing class. Any attempt to use the field `x` without an explicit specification of the desired instance causes a compilation error.

A good way to prevent confusion between the class hierarchy and the containment hierarchy is to avoid deep containment hierarchies. If a class is nested more than two levels deep, it is probably going to cause more confusion than it is worth. Furthermore, if a class has a deep class hierarchy (i.e., it has many superclass ancestors), consider defining it as a top-level class, rather than as a member class.

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3.11. Local Classes

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3.11. Local Classes

A *local class* is declared locally within a block of Java code, rather than as a member of a class. Typically, a local class is defined within a method, but it can also be defined within a static initializer or instance initializer of a class. Because all blocks of Java code appear within class definitions, all local classes are nested within containing classes. For this reason, local classes share many of the features of member classes. It is usually more appropriate, however, to think of them as an entirely separate kind of inner class. A local class has approximately the same relationship to a member class as a local variable has to an instance variable of a class.

The defining characteristic of a local class is that it is local to a block of code. Like a local variable, a local class is valid only within the scope defined by its enclosing block. If a member class is used only within a single method of its containing class, for example, there is usually no reason it cannot be coded as a local class, rather than a member class.

[Example 3-10](#) shows how we can modify the `enumerate()` method of the `LinkedStack` class so it defines `Enumerator` as a local class instead of a member class. By doing this, we move the definition of the class even closer to where it is used and hopefully improve the clarity of the code even further. For brevity, [Example 3-10](#) shows only the `enumerate()` method, not the entire `LinkedStack` class that contains it.

Example 3-10. Defining and Using a Local Class

```
// This method creates and returns an Enumeration object
public java.util.Enumeration enumerate() {

    // Here's the definition of Enumerator as a local class
    class Enumerator implements java.util.Enumeration {
        Linkable current;
        public Enumerator() { current = head; }
        public boolean hasMoreElements() { return (current != null); }
        public Object nextElement() {
            if (current == null) throw new java.util.NoSuchElementException();
            Object value = current;
            current = current.getNext();
            return value;
        }
    }

    // Now return an instance of the Enumerator class defined directly above
    return new Enumerator();
}
```

3.11.1. Features of Local Classes

Local classes have the following interesting features:

- Like member classes, local classes are associated with a containing instance, and can access any members, including `private` members, of the containing class.
- In addition to accessing fields defined by the containing class, local classes can access any local variables, method parameters, or exception parameters that are in the scope of the local method definition and declared `final`.

3.11.2. Restrictions on Local Classes

Local classes are subject to the following restrictions:

- A local class is visible only within the block that defines it; it can never be used outside that block.
- Local classes cannot be declared `public`, `protected`, `private`, or `static`. These modifiers are for members of classes; they are not allowed with local variable declarations or local class declarations.
- Like member classes, and for the same reasons, local classes cannot contain `static` fields, methods, or classes. The only exception is for constants that are declared both `static` and `final`.
- Interfaces cannot be defined locally.
- A local class, like a member class, cannot have the same name as any of its enclosing classes.
- As noted earlier, a local class can use the local variables, method parameters, and even exception parameters that are in its scope, but only if those variables or parameters are declared `final`. This is because the lifetime of an instance of a local class can be much longer than the execution of the method in which the class is defined. For this reason, a local class must have a private internal copy of all local variables it uses (these copies are automatically generated by the compiler). The only way to ensure that the local variable and the private copy are always the same is to insist that the local variable is `final`.

3.11.3. New Syntax for Local Classes

In Java 1.0, only fields, methods, and classes can be declared `final`. The addition of local classes in Java 1.1 has required a liberalization in the use of the `final` modifier. It can now be applied to local variables, method parameters, and even the exception parameter of a `catch` statement. The meaning of the `final` modifier remains the same in these new uses: once the local variable or parameter has been assigned a value, that value cannot be changed.

Instances of local classes, like instances of member classes, have an enclosing instance that is implicitly passed to all constructors of the local class. Local classes can use the same `this` syntax as member classes, to refer explicitly to members of enclosing classes. Because local classes are never visible outside the blocks that define them, however, there is never a need to use the `new` and `super` syntax used by member classes to specify the enclosing instance explicitly.

3.11.4. Scope of a Local Class

In discussing member classes, we saw that a member class can access any members inherited from superclasses and any members defined by its containing classes. The same is true for local classes, but local classes can also access `final` local variables and parameters. The following code illustrates the many fields and variables that may be accessible to a

local class:

```

class A { protected char a = 'a'; }
class B { protected char b = 'b'; }

public class C extends A {
    private char c = 'c';           // Private fields visible to local class
    public static char d = 'd';
    public void createLocalObject(final char e)
    {
        final char f = 'f';
        int i = 0;                  // i not final; not usable by local class
        class Local extends B
        {
            char g = 'g';
            public void printVars()
            {
                // All of these fields and variables are accessible to this class
                System.out.println(g); // (this.g) g is a field of this class
                System.out.println(f); // f is a final local variable
                System.out.println(e); // e is a final local parameter
                System.out.println(d); // (C.this.d) d -- field of containing class
                System.out.println(c); // (C.this.c) c -- field of containing class
                System.out.println(b); // b is inherited by this class
                System.out.println(a); // a is inherited by the containing class
            }
        }
        Local l = new Local();       // Create an instance of the local class
        l.printVars();               // and call its printVars() method.
    }
}

```

3.11.5. Local Classes and Local Variable Scope

A local variable is defined within a block of code, which defines its scope. A local variable ceases to exist outside of its scope. Java is a *lexically scoped* language, which means that its concept of scope has to do with the way the source code is written. Any code within the curly braces that define the boundaries of a block can use local variables defined in that block.[\[9\]](#)

[9] This section covers advanced material; first-time readers may want to skip it for now and return to it later.

Lexical scoping simply defines a segment of source code within which a variable can be used. It is common, however, to think of a scope as a temporal scope--to think of a local variable as existing from the time the Java interpreter begins executing the block until the time the interpreter exits the block. This is usually a reasonable way to think about local variables and their scope.

The introduction of local classes confuses the picture, however, because local classes can use local variables, and instances of a local class can have a lifetime much longer than the time it takes the interpreter to execute the block of

code. In other words, if you create an instance of a local class, the instance does not automatically go away when the interpreter finishes executing the block that defines the class, as shown in the following code:

```
public class Weird {
    // A static member interface used below
    public static interface IntHolder { public int getValue(); }

    public static void main(String[] args) {
        IntHolder[] holders = new IntHolder[10];    // An array to hold 10 objects
        for(int i = 0; i < 10; i++) {               // Loop to fill the array up
            final int fi = i;                        // A final local variable
            class MyIntHolder implements IntHolder { // A local class
                public int getValue() { return fi; } // It uses the final variable
            }
            holders[i] = new MyIntHolder();          // Instantiate the local class
        }

        // The local class is now out of scope, so we can't use it. But
        // we've got ten valid instances of that class in our array. The local
        // variable fi is not in our scope here, but it is still in scope for
        // the getValue() method of each of those ten objects. So call getValue()
        // for each object and print it out. This prints the digits 0 to 9.
        for(int i = 0; i < 10; i++) System.out.println(holders[i].getValue());
    }
}
```

The behavior of the previous program is pretty surprising. To make sense of it, remember that the lexical scope of the methods of a local class has nothing to do with when the interpreter enters and exits the block of code that defines the local class. Here's another way to think about it: each instance of a local class has an automatically created private copy of each of the final local variables it uses, so, in effect, it has its own private copy of the scope that existed when it was created.

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3.12. Anonymous Classes

An *anonymous class* is a local class without a name. An anonymous class is defined and instantiated in a single succinct expression using the `new` operator. While a local class definition is a statement in a block of Java code, an anonymous class definition is an expression, which means that it can be included as part of a larger expression, such as a method call. When a local class is used only once, consider using anonymous class syntax, which places the definition and use of the class in exactly the same place.

Consider [Example 3-11](#), which shows the `Enumeration` class implemented as an anonymous class within the `enumerate()` method of the `LinkedStack` class. Compare it with [Example 3-10](#), which shows the same class implemented as a local class.

Example 3-11. An Enumeration Implemented with an Anonymous Class

```
public java.util.Enumeration enumerate() {
    // The anonymous class is defined as part of the return statement
    return new java.util.Enumeration() {
        Linkable current; = head;
        { current = head; } // Replace constructor with an instance initializer
        public boolean hasMoreElements() { return (current != null); }
        public Object nextElement() {
            if (current == null) throw new java.util.NoSuchElementException();
            Object value = current;
            current = current.getNext();
            return value;
        }
    }; // Note the required semicolon: it terminates the return statement
}
```

One common use for an anonymous class is to provide a simple implementation of an adapter class. An *adapter class* is one that defines code that is invoked by some other object. Take, for example, the `list()` method of the `java.io.File` class. This method lists the files in a directory. Before it returns the list, though, it passes the name of each file to a `FilenameFilter` object you must supply. This `FilenameFilter` object accepts or rejects each file. When you implement the `FilenameFilter` interface, you are defining an adapter class for use with the `File.list()` method. Since the body of such a class is typically quite short, it is easy to define an adapter class as an anonymous class. Here's how you can define a `FilenameFilter` class to list only those files whose names end with `.java`:

```
File f = new File("/src"); // The directory to list

// Now call the list() method with a single FilenameFilter argument
```

```
// Define and instantiate an anonymous implementation of FilenameFilter
// as part of the method invocation expression.
String[] filelist = f.list(new FilenameFilter() {
    public boolean accept(File f, String s) { return s.endsWith(".java"); }
}); // Don't forget the parenthesis and semicolon that end the method call!
```

As you can see, the syntax for defining an anonymous class and creating an instance of that class uses the `new` keyword, followed by the name of a class and a class body definition in curly braces. If the name following the `new` keyword is the name of a class, the anonymous class is a subclass of the named class. If the name following `new` specifies an interface, as in the two previous examples, the anonymous class implements that interface and extends `Object`. The syntax does not include any way to specify an `extends` clause, an `implements` clause, or a name for the class.

Because an anonymous class has no name, it is not possible to define a constructor for it within the class body. This is one of the basic restrictions on anonymous classes. Any arguments you specify between the parentheses following the superclass name in an anonymous class definition are implicitly passed to the superclass constructor. Anonymous classes are commonly used to subclass simple classes that do not take any constructor arguments, so the parentheses in the anonymous class definition syntax are often empty. In the previous examples, each anonymous class implemented an interface and extended `Object`. Since the `Object()` constructor takes no arguments, the parentheses were empty in those examples.

3.12.1. Features of Anonymous Classes

One of the most elegant things about anonymous classes is that they allow you to define a one-shot class exactly where it is needed. In addition, anonymous classes have a succinct syntax that reduces clutter in your code.

3.12.2. Restrictions on Anonymous Classes

Because an anonymous class is just a type of local class, anonymous classes and local classes share the same restrictions. An anonymous class cannot define any `static` fields, methods, or classes, except for `static final` constants. Interfaces cannot be defined anonymously, since there is no way to implement an interface without a name. Also, like local classes, anonymous classes cannot be `public`, `private`, `protected`, or `static`.

Since an anonymous class has no name, it is not possible to define a constructor for an anonymous class. If your class requires a constructor, you must use a local class instead. However, you can often use an instance initializer as a substitute for a constructor. In fact, instance initializers were introduced into the language for this very purpose.

The syntax for defining an anonymous class combines definition with instantiation. Thus, using an anonymous class instead of a local class is not appropriate if you need to create more than a single instance of the class each time the containing block is executed.

3.12.3. New Syntax for Anonymous Classes

We've already seen examples of the syntax for defining and instantiating an anonymous class. We can express that syntax more formally as:

```
new class-name ( [ argument-list ] ) { class-body }
```

or:

```
new interface-name () { class-body }
```

As I already mentioned, instance initializers are another specialized piece of Java syntax that was introduced to support anonymous classes. As we discussed earlier in the chapter, an instance initializer is a block of initialization code contained within curly braces inside a class definition. The contents of an instance initializer for a class are automatically inserted into all constructors for the class, including any automatically created default constructor. An anonymous class cannot define a constructor, so it gets a default constructor. By using an instance initializer, you can get around the fact that you cannot define a constructor for an anonymous class.

3.12.4. When to Use an Anonymous Class

As we've discussed, an anonymous class behaves just like a local class and is distinguished from a local class merely in the syntax used to define and instantiate it. In your own code, when you have to choose between using an anonymous class and a local class, the decision often comes down to a matter of style. You should use whichever syntax makes your code clearer. In general, you should consider using an anonymous class instead of a local class if:

- The class has a very short body.
- Only one instance of the class is needed.
- The class is used right after it is defined.
- The name of the class does not make your code any easier to understand.

3.12.5. Anonymous Class Indentation and Formatting

The common indentation and formatting conventions we are familiar with for block-structured languages like Java and C begin to break down somewhat once we start placing anonymous class definitions within arbitrary expressions. Based on their experience with inner classes, the engineers at Sun recommend the following formatting rules:

- The opening curly brace should not be on a line by itself; instead, it should follow the close parenthesis of the new operator. Similarly, the new operator should, when possible, appear on the same line as the assignment or other expression of which it is a part.
- The body of the anonymous class should be indented relative to the beginning of the line that contains the new keyword.
- The closing curly brace of an anonymous class should not be on a line by itself either; it should be followed by whatever tokens are required by the rest of the expression. Often this is a semicolon or a close parenthesis followed by a semicolon. This extra punctuation serves as a flag to the reader that this is not just an ordinary block of code and makes it easier to understand anonymous classes in a code listing.

3.13. How Inner Classes Work

The preceding sections have explained the features and behavior of the various types of inner classes. Strictly speaking, that should be all you need to know about inner classes. In practice, however, some programmers find it easier to understand the details of inner classes if they understand how they are implemented.

Inner classes were introduced in Java 1.1. Despite the dramatic changes to the Java language, the introduction of inner classes did not change the Java Virtual Machine or the Java class file format. As far as the Java interpreter is concerned, there is no such thing as an inner class: all classes are normal top-level classes. In order to make an inner class behave as if it is actually defined inside another class, the Java compiler ends up inserting hidden fields, methods, and constructor arguments into the classes it generates. You may want to use the *javap* disassembler to disassemble some of the class files for inner classes so you can see what tricks the compiler has used to make inner classes work. (See [Chapter 8, "Java Development Tools"](#), for information on *javap*.)

3.13.1. Static Member Class Implementation

Recall our first `LinkedList` example ([Example 3-8](#)), which defined a static member interface named `Linkable`. When you compile this `LinkedList` class, the compiler actually generates two class files. The first one is `LinkedList.class`, as expected. The second class file, however, is called `LinkedList$Linkable.class`. The `$` in this name is automatically inserted by the Java compiler. This second class file contains the implementation of the static member interface.

As we discussed earlier, a static member class can access all the `static` members of its containing class. If a static member class does this, the compiler automatically qualifies the member access expression with the name of the containing class. A static member class is even allowed to access the `private static` fields of its containing class. Since the static member class is compiled into an ordinary top-level class, however, there is no way it can directly access the `private` members of its container. Therefore, if a static member class uses a `private` member of its containing class (or vice versa), the compiler automatically generates `non-private` access methods and converts the expressions that access the `private` members into expressions that access these specially generated methods. These methods are given the default package access, which is sufficient, as the member class and its containing class are guaranteed to be in the same package.

3.13.2. Member Class Implementation

A member class is implemented much like a static member class. It is compiled into a separate top-level class file, and the compiler performs various code manipulations to make interclass member access work correctly.

The most significant difference between a member class and a static member class is that each instance of a member class is associated with an instance of the enclosing class. The compiler enforces this association by defining a synthetic field named `this$0` in each member class. This field is used to hold a reference to the enclosing instance. Every member class constructor is given an extra parameter that initializes this field. Every time a member class constructor is invoked, the compiler automatically passes a reference to the enclosing class for this extra parameter.

As we've seen, a member class, like any member of a class, can be declared `public`, `protected`, or `private`, or given the default package visibility. However, as I mentioned earlier, there have been no changes to the Java Virtual Machine to support member classes. Member classes are compiled to class files just like top-level classes, but top-level classes can only have `public` or package access. Therefore, as far as the Java interpreter is concerned, member classes can only have `public` or package visibility. This means that a member class declared `protected` is actually treated as a `public` class, and a member class declared `private` actually has package visibility. This does not mean you should never declare a member class as `protected` or `private`. Although the interpreter cannot enforce these access control modifiers, the modifiers are noted in the class file. This allows any conforming Java compiler to enforce the access modifiers and prevent the member classes from being accessed in unintended ways.

3.13.3. Local and Anonymous Class Implementation

A local class is able to refer to fields and methods in its containing class for exactly the same reason that a member class can; it is passed a hidden reference to the containing class in its constructor and saves that reference away in a `private` field added by the compiler. Also, like member classes, local classes can use `private` fields and methods of their containing class because the compiler inserts any required accessor methods.

What makes local classes different from member classes is that they have the ability to refer to local variables in the scope that defines them. The crucial restriction on this ability, however, is that local classes can only reference local variables and parameters that are declared `final`. The reason for this restriction becomes apparent from the implementation. A local class can use local variables because the compiler automatically gives the class a `private` instance field to hold a copy of each local variable the class uses. The compiler also adds hidden parameters to each local class constructor to initialize these automatically created `private` fields. Thus, a local class does not actually access local variables, but merely its own `private` copies of them. The only way this can work correctly is if the local variables are declared `final`, so that they are guaranteed not to change. With this guarantee, the local class can be

assured that its internal copies of the variables are always in sync with the real local variables.

Since anonymous classes have no names, you may wonder what the class files that represent them are named. This is an implementation detail, but the Java compiler from Sun uses numbers to provide anonymous class names. If you compile the example shown in [Example 3-11](#), you'll find that it produces a file with a name like *LinkedList\$1.class*. This is the class file for the anonymous class.

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3.14. Modifier Summary

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3.14. Modifier Summary

As we've seen, classes, interfaces, and their members can be declared with one or more *modifiers*--keywords such as `public`, `static`, and `final`. This chapter has introduced the `public`, `protected`, and `private` access modifiers, as well as the `abstract`, `final`, and `static` modifiers. In addition to these six, Java defines five other less commonly used modifiers. [Table 3-2](#) lists the Java modifiers, explains what types of Java constructs they can modify, and explains what they do.

Table 3-2. Java Modifiers

Modifier	Used on	Meaning
abstract	class	The class contains unimplemented methods and cannot be instantiated.
	interface	All interfaces are <code>abstract</code> . The modifier is optional in interface declarations.
abstract	method	No body is provided for the method; it is provided by a subclass. The signature is followed by a semicolon. The enclosing class must also be <code>abstract</code> .
final	class	The class cannot be subclassed.
	method	The method cannot be overridden (and is not subject to dynamic method lookup).
	field	The field cannot have its value changed. <code>static final</code> fields are compile-time constants.
	variable	A local variable, method parameter, or exception parameter cannot have its value changed (Java 1.1 and later). Useful with local classes.

<code>native</code>	method	The method is implemented in some platform-dependent way (often in C). No body is provided; the signature is followed by a semicolon.
<code>none (package)</code>	class	A non- <code>public</code> class is accessible only in its package.
	interface	A non- <code>public</code> interface is accessible only in its package.
	member	A member that is not <code>private</code> , <code>protected</code> , or <code>public</code> has package visibility and is accessible only within its package.
<code>private</code>	member	The member is accessible only within the class that defines it.
<code>protected</code>	member	The member is accessible only within the package in which it is defined and within subclasses.
<code>public</code>	class	The class is accessible anywhere its package is.
	interface	The interface is accessible anywhere its package is.
	member	The member is accessible anywhere its class is.
<code>strictfp</code>	class	All methods of the class are implicitly <code>strictfp</code> (Java 1.2 and later).
<code>strictfp</code>	method	All floating-point computation done by the method must be performed in a way that strictly conforms to the IEEE 754 standard. In particular, all values, including intermediate results, must be expressed as IEEE <code>float</code> or <code>double</code> values and cannot take advantage of any extra precision or range offered by native platform floating-point formats or hardware (Java 1.2 and later). This modifier is rarely used.
<code>static</code>	class	An inner class declared <code>static</code> is a top-level class, not associated with a member of the containing class (Java 1.1 and later).
	method	A <code>static</code> method is a class method. It is not passed an implicit <code>this</code> object reference. It can be invoked through the class name.

	field	A <code>static</code> field is a class field. There is only one instance of the field, regardless of the number of class instances created. It can be accessed through the class name.
	initializer	The initializer is run when the class is loaded, rather than when an instance is created.
<code>synchronized</code>	method	The method makes non-atomic modifications to the class or instance, so care must be taken to ensure that two threads cannot modify the class or instance at the same time. For a <code>static</code> method, a lock for the class is acquired before executing the method. For a non- <code>static</code> method, a lock for the specific object instance is acquired.
<code>transient</code>	field	The field is not part of the persistent state of the object and should not be serialized with the object. Used with object serialization; see <code>java.io.ObjectOutputStream</code> .
<code>volatile</code>	field	The field can be accessed by unsynchronized threads, so certain optimizations must not be performed on it. This modifier can sometimes be used as an alternative to <code>synchronized</code> . This modifier is very rarely used.

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3.15. C++ Features Not Found in Java

3.15. C++ Features Not Found in Java

Throughout this chapter, I've noted similarities and differences between Java and C++ in footnotes. Java shares enough concepts and features with C++ to make it an easy language for C++ programmers to pick up. There are several features of C++ that have no parallel in Java, however. In general, Java does not adopt those features of C++ that make the language significantly more complicated.

C++ supports multiple inheritance of method implementations from more than one superclass at a time. While this seems like a useful feature, it actually introduces many complexities to the language. The Java language designers chose to avoid the added complexity by using interfaces instead. Thus, a class in Java can inherit method implementations only from a single superclass, but it can inherit method declarations from any number of interfaces.

C++ supports templates that allow you, for example, to implement a `Stack` class and then instantiate it as `Stack<int>` or `Stack<double>` to produce two separate types: a stack of integers and a stack of floating-point values. Java does not allow this, but efforts are underway to add this feature to the language in a robust and standardized way. Furthermore, the fact that every class in Java is a subclass of `Object` means that every object can be cast to an instance of `Object`. Thus, in Java it is often sufficient to define a data structure (such as a `Stack` class) that operates on `Object` values; the objects can be cast back to their actual types whenever necessary.

C++ allows you to define operators that perform arbitrary operations on instances of your classes. In effect, it allows you to extend the syntax of the language. This is a nifty feature, called operator overloading, that makes for elegant examples. In practice, however, it tends to make code quite difficult to understand. After much debate, the Java language designers decided to omit such operator overloading from the language. Note, though, that the use of the `+` operator for string concatenation in Java is at least reminiscent of operator overloading.

C++ allows you to define conversion functions for a class that automatically invoke an appropriate constructor method when a value is assigned to a variable of that class. This is simply a syntactic shortcut (similar to overriding the assignment operator) and is not included in Java.

In C++, objects are manipulated by value by default; you must use `&` to specify a variable or function argument automatically manipulated by reference. In Java, all objects are manipulated by reference, so there is no need for this `&` syntax.

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4. The Java Platform

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