

Lambda Expressions

A *lambda expression* is an unnamed function, together with its scope (called a *closure*). To use lambdas in Java, you need at least Java version 8. The syntax of a lambda expression is:

```
(Datatype variable[,...]) -> { statement block; }
```

for example, a lambda that prints its argument to **System.out** is:

```
(Object x) -> { System.out.println(x); }
```

in cases where there is only one variable and the data type can be inferred from context, you can omit the data type and parenthesis:

```
x -> { System.out.println( x ); }
```

if the lambda definition is only a single statement you can omit the brackets { } and semi-colon, too.

```
x -> System.out.println( x )
```

Use of Lambda Expressions

The most common use is to define an implementation of an interface that has only one required method. These are called *functional interfaces*. The examples below illustrate this use.

Simple Examples

In a Swing GUI, we can add an **ActionListener** to a button using an anonymous class like this:

```
button.addActionListener( new ActionListener( ) {  
    @Override  
    public void actionPerformed((ActionEvent evt) {  
        System.out.println( evt.getSource() + " pressed" );  
    }  
} );
```

Using a lambda expression we could write this as:

```
button.addActionListener(  
    (ActionEvent evt) -> {  
        System.out.println( evt.getSource() + " pressed" ); } );
```

Java knows from context that an **ActionListener** is required as argument to **addActionListener()** and it knows that **ActionListener** has only one method, with a parameter of type **ActionEvent**. Hence, the meaning of the Lambda is clear from context. Thus, we can further simplify this to:

```
button.addActionListener(  
    evt -> System.out.println( evt.getSource() + " pressed" ) );
```

Suppose we want a **Comparator** to preform a *case insensitive* sorting of an array of Strings.

```
String [] array = { "Jack fruit", "durian", "Apple", "fig", "banana"};  
Comparator<String> comp = new Comparator<String>( ) {  
    public int compare(String a, String b) {  
        return a.compareToIgnoreCase(b);  
    }  
};  
Arrays.sort( array, comp );
```

Using a lambda expression, with 2 parameters, we would write this as:

```
Comparator<String> comp = (a,b) -> a.compareToIgnoreCase(b) ;
```

```
Arrays.sort( array, comp );
```

Or we could define the comparator inline:

```
Arrays.sort( array, (a,b) -> a.compareToIgnoreCase(b) );
```

The Java compiler knows that the second argument to `Arrays.sort` must be a `Comparator`, and can infer that the type must be `String`.

Lambdas for Functions without Arguments

To write a lambda expression for a method without parameters, use `()` for the lambda params, as down in method declarations. For example, the `Runnable` interface has a single method `run()`. To write a lambda as `Runnable`:

```
Runnable task = () -> System.out.println("running") ;
```

Lambda as Commands

Suppose we have a list of Students with a name, id, and birthday.

We want to print all the students born this month (so we can send them a birthday gift).

A simple code for this is:

```
public void filterAndPrint( List<Student> students, int month ) {  
    for(Student s : students ) {  
        if (s.getBirthday().getMonthValue() == month)  
            System.out.println( s );  
    }  
}
```

Code improvement:

- 1) define a Filter interface with a single method `boolean test(Student s)`.
- 2) use anonymous class to define Filter for birthday.
- 3) use lambda instead of anonymous class.
- 4) don't need Filter: `java.util.function.Predicate` does the same thing.
- 5) add a Consumer to generalize "print".

Student

name: String
id: String
birthday: LocalDate

References

- Oracle's *Java Tutorial* has a section on Lambda expressions. It also has a section on the new properties of interfaces in Java 8.