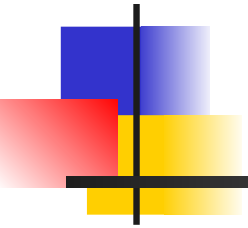


Object References

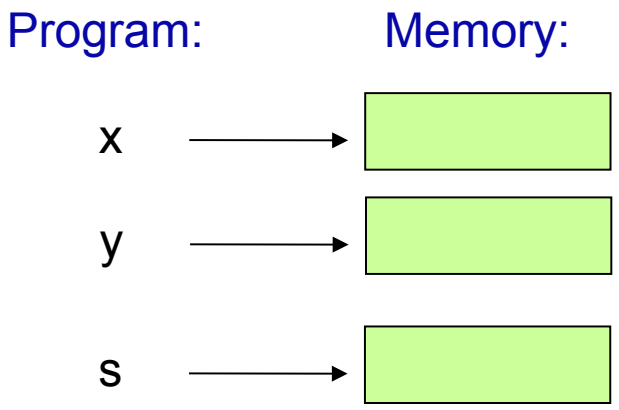
James Brucker

Variables

A variable is a name we use to *refer* to a memory location.

What's in the memory location?

```
/* define two variables */
int x;
float y;
String s;
```



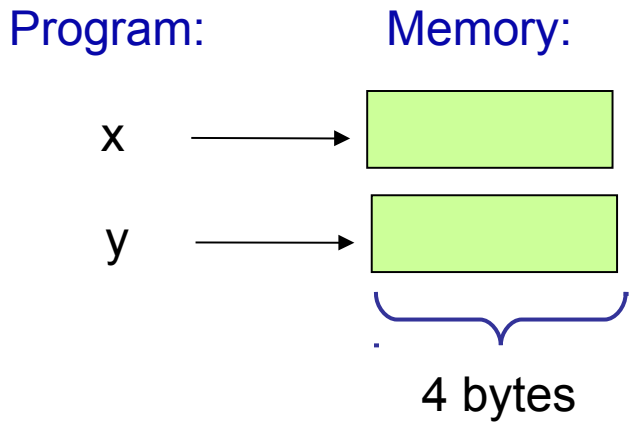
We will see that the answer is ***different*** for variables of primitive data types and variables of *object* data types.

This is an important distinction -- know it!

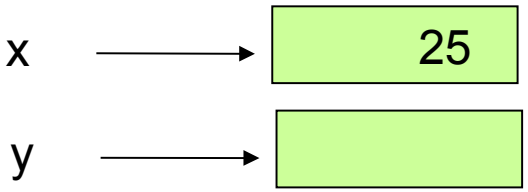
Variables for Primitive Data Types

For primitive data types, the variable's memory location holds its value. Data types for which this is true are called **value data types**.

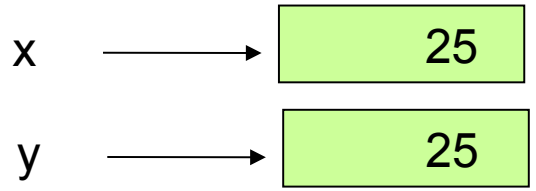
```
/* define two "int"
  variables */
int x;
int y;
```




```
/* assign value to x */
x = 25;
```



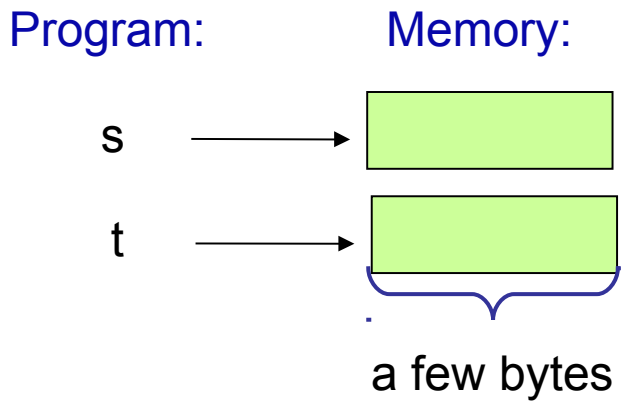

```
/* assign value to y */
y = x;
```



Variables for Object Data Types (1)

For object data types, a variable is a *reference* to the object, but does not provide storage for the object !!

```
/* define two String
  variables */
String s;
String t;
s = t;
```

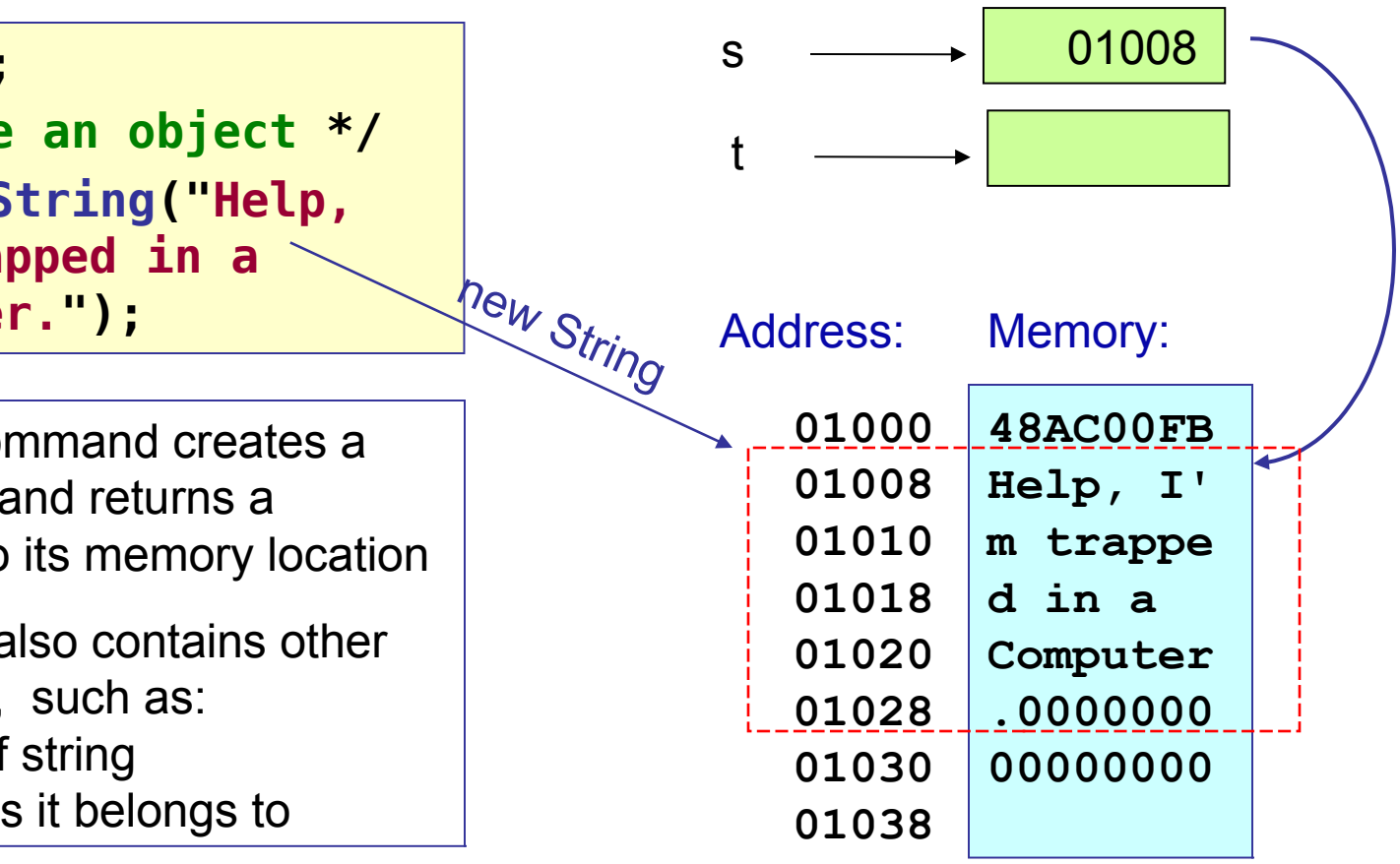


Variables for Object Data Types (2)

To *create* an object you must use the "new" keyword.

This allocates new storage in a section of memory called the heap.

```
String s;
/* create an object */
s = new String("Help,
  I'm trapped in a
  Computer.");
```



The new command creates a new object and returns a *reference* to its memory location

The object also contains other information, such as:

- length of string
- the Class it belongs to

Variables for Object Data Types (3)

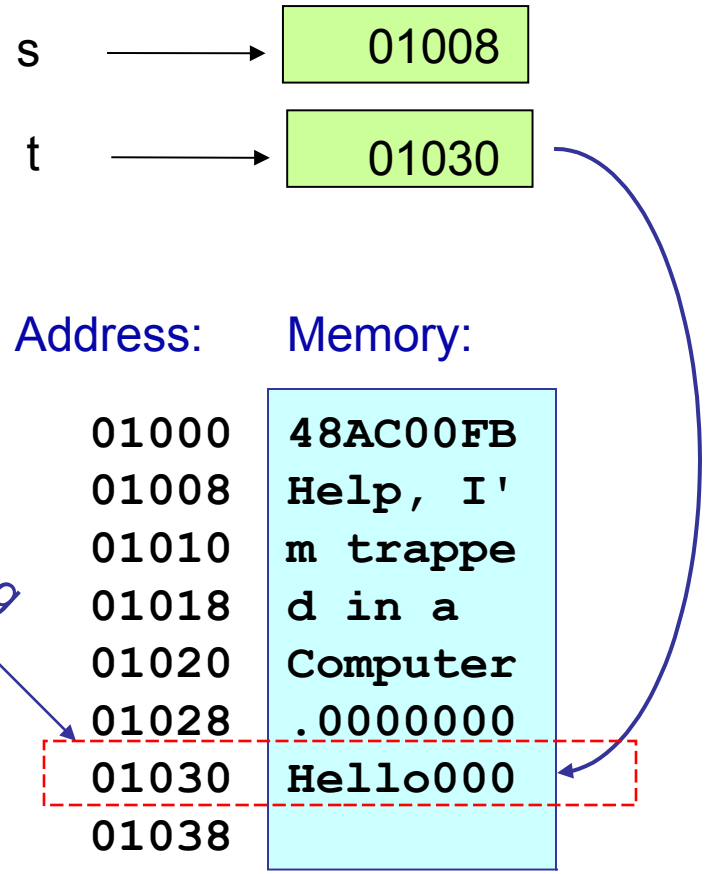
Each new object gets its own storage space on the heap.

This makes sense: an object's data might be of any size.

```
/* create an object */

t = new String("Hello");
```

The new command finds some more free "heap" space large enough for the String "Hello". It creates a String object and returns a *reference* to it.



Variables for Object Data Types (4)

When you *assign a value* to an object variable (object reference), what you are assigning is the ***address*** of the object -- not the object's data!

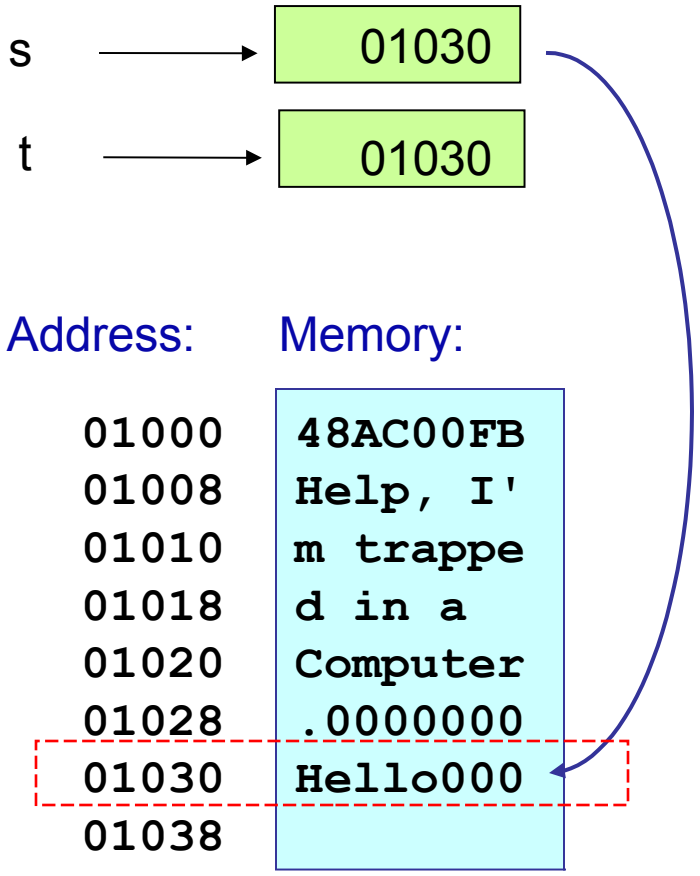
```
/* assign a value */


s = t;
```

Now `s` references the same object as `t ("Hello")`.

The old String object has no reference ... it is garbage.

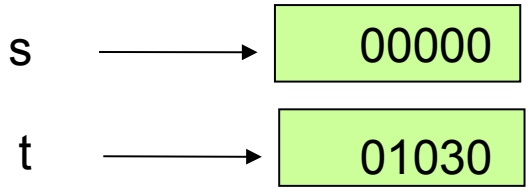
Eventually Java will reclaim the storage space for re-use.



The null value

If an object variable (object reference) doesn't refer to any object, it is assigned a value of null. You can use this to "clear" a reference.

```
/* discard old value */
s = null;
```



Address: Memory:

Address	Memory
01000	48AC00FB
01008	Help, I'
01010	m trappe
01018	d in a
01020	Computer
01028	.0000000
01030	Hello000
01038	

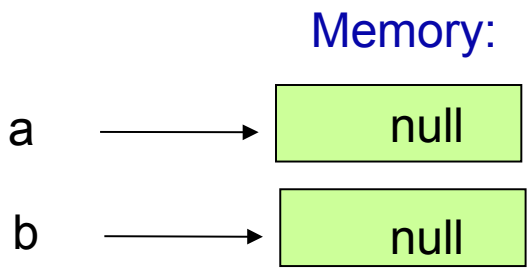
Now `s` doesn't refer to anything.

But, Java still knows that "s" can only reference an object of type "String".

Another Example: BankAccount (1)

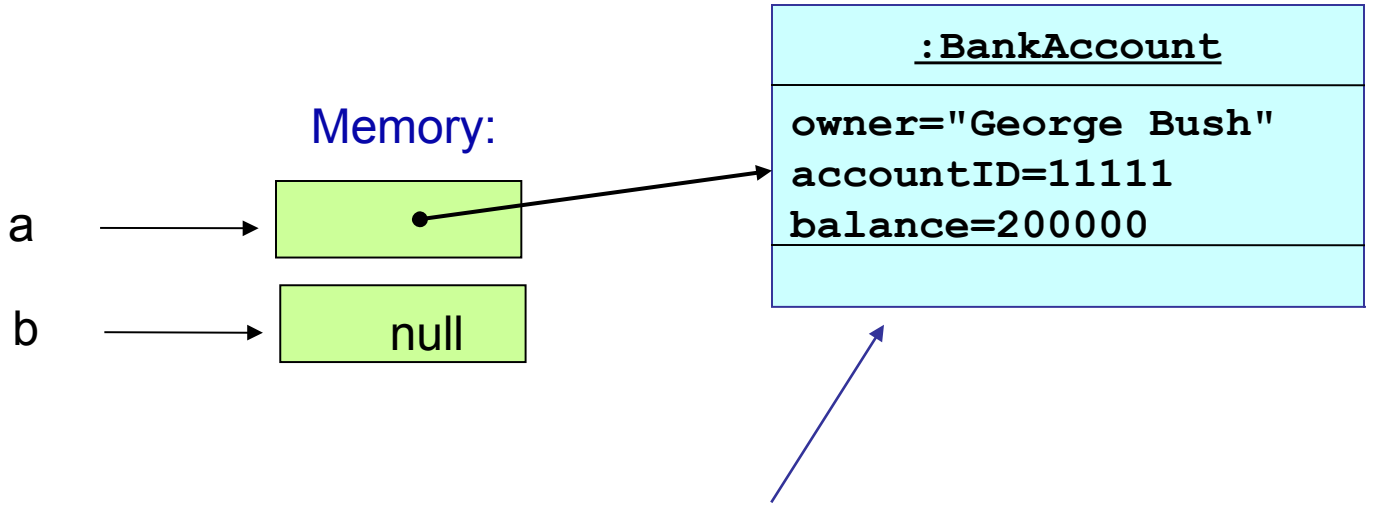
```
BankAccount a;
BankAccount b;
```

This creates BankAccount *references*, but doesn't create any BankAccount *objects*.



Another Example: BankAccount (2)

```
a = new BankAccount( "George Bush",11111);
a.deposit(200000);
```

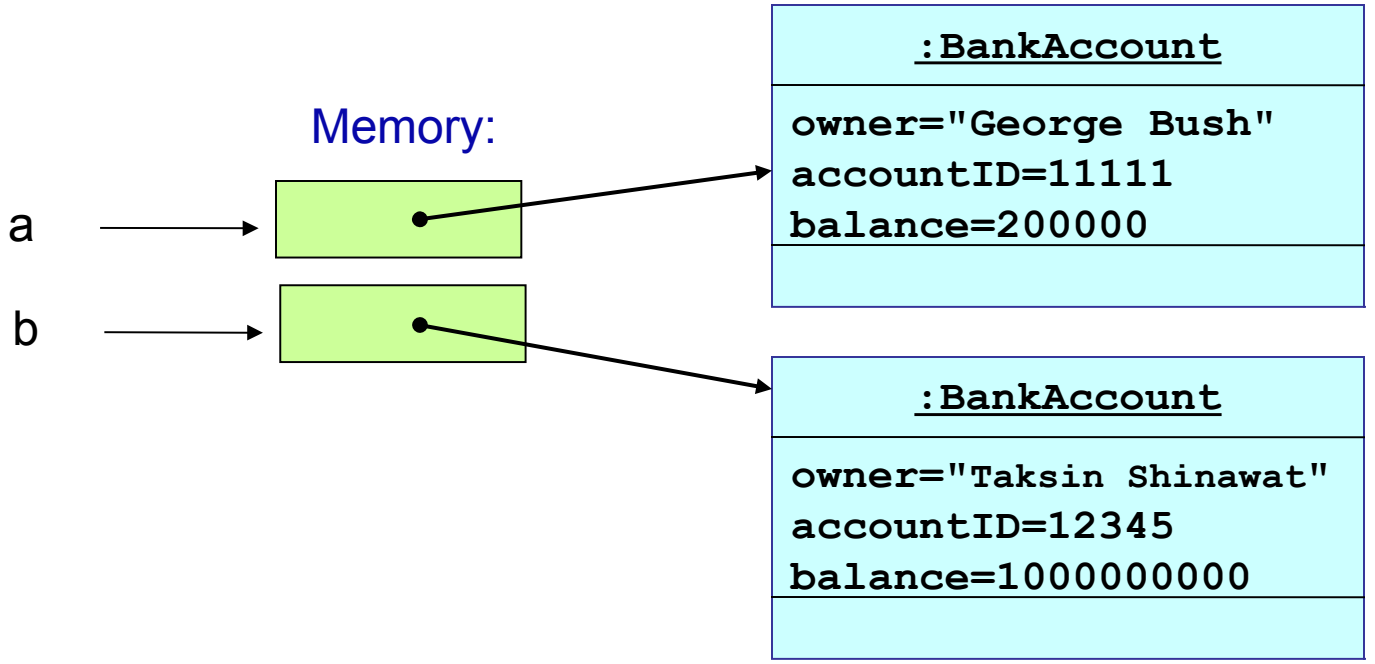


UML *object diagram* notation, to emphasize that an object is a bundle of data and methods.

A variable is a *reference* to the object.

Another Example: BankAccount (3)

```
b = new BankAccount( "Taksin Shinawat",12345);
b.deposit(1000000000);
```



Another Example: BankAccount (4)

```
// copy Taksin's data into the other object?
a = b;
```

No copy! It makes **a** "point to" the same object as **b**.