A tour of the C# Language

# Introduction

At its core, C# is an ***object-oriented*** language. You define types and their behavior.

Several C# features help create robust and durable applications:

* **Garbage collection** automatically reclaims memory occupied by unreachable unused objects.
* **Nullable types** guard against variables that don't refer to allocated objects.
* **Exception handling** provides a structured and extensible approach to error detection and recovery.
* **Lambda expressions** support functional programming techniques.
* **Language Integrated Query (LINQ)** syntax creates a common pattern for working with data from any source.
* Language support for **asynchronous operations** provides syntax for building distributed systems.
* C# has a **unified type system**. All C# types, including primitive types such as int and double, inherit from a single root object type.

## .NET architecture

C# programs run on .NET, a virtual execution system called the common language runtime (CLR) and a set of class libraries.

The CLR provides other services related to automatic garbage collection, exception handling, and resource management.

## Types and variables

A *type* defines the structure and behavior of any data in C#. The declaration of a type may include its members, base type, interfaces it implements, and operations permitted for that type.

A *variable* is a label that refers to an instance of a specific type.

There are two kinds of types in C#:

* *value* types
* *reference* types.

Variables of value types directly contain their data. Variables of reference types store references to their data, the latter being known as objects.

With value types, the variables each have their own copy of the data, and it isn't possible for operations on one to affect the other (except for ref and out parameter variables).

C#'s value types are further divided into:

* simple types,
* enum types,
* struct types,
* nullable value types,
* tuple value types.

C#'s reference types are further divided into:

* class types,
* interface types,
* array types,
* delegate types.
* A class types support single inheritance and polymorphism, mechanisms whereby derived classes can extend and specialize base classes.
* A struct type is similar to a class type in that it represents a structure with data members and function members.
  + However, unlike classes, structs are value types and don't typically require heap allocation.
  + Struct types don't support user-specified inheritance, and all struct types implicitly inherit from type object.
* An interface type defines a contract as a named set of public members.

C#'s type system is unified such that a value of any type can be treated as an object.

Every type in C# directly or indirectly derives from the object class type, and object is the ultimate base class of all types.

Values of value types are treated as objects by performing boxing and unboxing operations.

int i = 123;

object o = i; // Boxing

int j = (int)o; // Unboxing

## Program structure

The key organizational concepts in C# are:

* programs,
  + Programs declare types, which contain members and can be organized into namespaces.
* namespaces,
* types,
  + Classes, structs, and interfaces are examples of types.
* members,
  + Fields, methods, properties, and events are examples of members.
* assemblies.
  + When C# programs are compiled, they're physically packaged into assemblies.
  + Assemblies typically have the file extension .exe or .dll, depending on whether they implement applications or libraries, respectively.

# Types