The Java Tutorials have been written for JDK 8. Examples and practices described in this page don't take advantage of improvements introduced in later releases and might use technology no longer available.
See Java Language Changes for a summary of updated language features in Java SE 9 and subsequent releases.
See JDK Release Notes for information about new features, enhancements, and removed or deprecated options for all JDK releases.

About the Java Technology

Java technology is both a programming language and a platform.

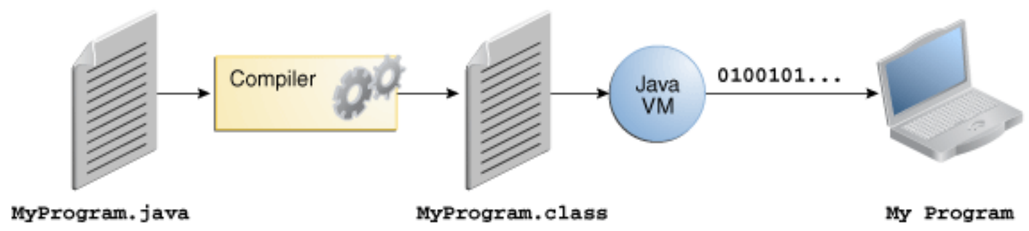
The Java Programming Language

The Java programming language is a high-level language that can be characterized by all of the following buzzwords:

- Simple
- Object oriented
- Distributed
- Multithreaded
- Dynamic
- Architecture neutral
- Portable
- High performance
- Robust
- Secure

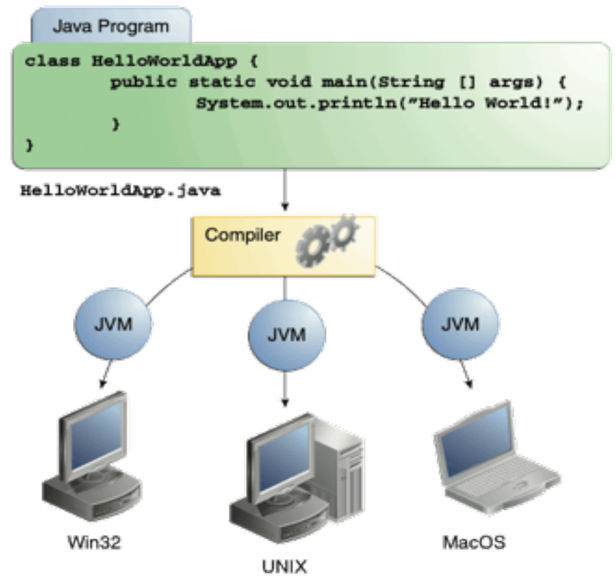
Each of the preceding buzzwords is explained in *The Java Language Environment* , a white paper written by James Gosling and Henry McGilton.

In the Java programming language, all source code is first written in plain text files ending with the `.java` extension. Those source files are then compiled into `.class` files by the `javac` compiler. A `.class` file does not contain code that is native to your processor; it instead contains *bytecodes* — the machine language of the Java Virtual Machine[1] (Java VM). The `java` launcher tool then runs your application with an instance of the Java Virtual Machine.



An overview of the software development process.

Because the Java VM is available on many different operating systems, the same `.class` files are capable of running on Microsoft Windows, the Solaris™ Operating System (Solaris OS), Linux, or Mac OS. Some virtual machines, such as the Java SE HotSpot at a Glance, perform additional steps at runtime to give your application a performance boost. This includes various tasks such as finding performance bottlenecks and recompiling (to native code) frequently used sections of code.



Through the Java VM, the same application is capable of running on multiple platforms.

The Java Platform

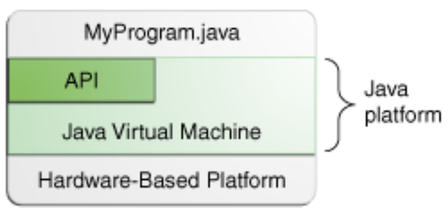
A *platform* is the hardware or software environment in which a program runs. We've already mentioned some of the most popular platforms like Microsoft Windows, Linux, Solaris OS, and Mac OS. Most platforms can be described as a combination of the operating system and underlying hardware. The Java platform differs from most other platforms in that it's a software-only platform that runs on top of other hardware-based platforms.

The Java platform has two components:

- The *Java Virtual Machine*
- The *Java Application Programming Interface* (API)

You've already been introduced to the Java Virtual Machine; it's the base for the Java platform and is ported onto various hardware-based platforms.

The API is a large collection of ready-made software components that provide many useful capabilities. It is grouped into libraries of related classes and interfaces; these libraries are known as *packages*. The next section, What Can Java Technology Do? highlights some of the functionality provided by the API.



The API and Java Virtual Machine insulate the program from the underlying hardware.

As a platform-independent environment, the Java platform can be a bit slower than native code. However, advances in compiler and virtual machine technologies are bringing performance close to that of native code without threatening portability.

The terms"Java Virtual Machine" and "JVM" mean a Virtual Machine for the Java platform.