

The  
Pragmatic  
Programmers

# Programming Flutter

Native, Cross-Platform  
Apps the Easy Way



Carmine Zaccagnino  
*edited by Michael Swaine*

---

# Programming Flutter

---

**NATIVE, CROSS-PLATFORM APPS THE  
EASY WAY**

**BY CARMINE ZACCAGNINO**

Version: P1.0 (February 2020)

Copyright © 2020 The Pragmatic Programmers, LLC. This book is licensed to the individual who purchased it. We don't copy-protect it because that would limit your ability to use it for your own purposes. Please don't break this trust—you can use this across all of your devices but please do not share this copy with other members of your team, with friends, or via file sharing services. Thanks.

Many of the designations used by manufacturers and sellers to distinguish their products are claimed as trademarks. Where those designations appear in this book, and The Pragmatic Programmers, LLC was aware of a trademark claim, the designations have been printed in initial capital letters or in all capitals. The Pragmatic Starter Kit, The Pragmatic Programmer, Pragmatic Programming, Pragmatic Bookshelf and the linking *g* device are trademarks of The Pragmatic Programmers, LLC.

Every precaution was taken in the preparation of this book. However, the publisher assumes no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for damages that may result from the use of information (including program listings) contained herein.

#### **About the Pragmatic Bookshelf**

The Pragmatic Bookshelf is an agile publishing company. We're here because we want to improve the lives of developers. We do this by

creating timely, practical titles, written by programmers for programmers.

Our Pragmatic courses, workshops, and other products can help you and your team create better software and have more fun. For more information, as well as the latest Pragmatic titles, please visit us at <http://pragprog.com>.

Our ebooks do not contain any Digital Restrictions Management, and have always been DRM-free. We pioneered the beta book concept, where you can purchase and read a book while it's still being written, and provide feedback to the author to help make a better book for everyone. Free resources for all purchasers include source code downloads (if applicable), errata and discussion forums, all available on the book's home page at [pragprog.com](http://pragprog.com). We're here to make your life easier.

#### **NEW BOOK ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Want to keep up on our latest titles and announcements, and occasional special offers? Just create an account on [pragprog.com](http://pragprog.com) (an email address and a password is all it takes) and select the checkbox to receive newsletters. You can also follow us on twitter as [@pragprog](https://twitter.com/pragprog).

#### **ABOUT EBOOK FORMATS**

If you buy directly from [pragprog.com](http://pragprog.com), you get ebooks in all available formats for one price. You can synch your ebooks amongst all your devices (including iPhone/iPad, Android, laptops, etc.) via Dropbox. You get free updates for the life of the

edition. And, of course, you can always come back and re-download your books when needed. Ebooks bought from the Amazon Kindle store are subject to Amazon's policies. Limitations in Amazon's file format may cause ebooks to display differently on different devices. For more information, please see our FAQ at [pragprog.com/frequently-asked-questions/ebooks](http://pragprog.com/frequently-asked-questions/ebooks). To learn more about this book and access the free resources, go to <https://pragprog.com/book/czflutr>, the book's homepage.

Thanks for your continued support,

Andy Hunt  
The Pragmatic Programmers

The team that produced this book includes:

Andy Hunt (Publisher),  
Janet Furlow (VP of Operations),  
Dave Rankin (Executive Editor),  
Michael Swaine (Development Editor),  
Jasmine Kwityn (Copy Editor),  
Potomac Indexing, LLC (Indexing),  
Gilson Graphics (Layout)

For customer support, please contact [support@pragprog.com](mailto:support@pragprog.com).

For international rights, please contact [rights@pragprog.com](mailto:rights@pragprog.com).

---

# Table of Contents

---

1. **Acknowledgments**

---

2. **Preface**

---

1. A Brief History of Flutter
2. Why Flutter Matters and What We'll See in This Book
3. Don't Know Dart? Don't Worry About It
4. Installing the SDK and the IDE Plugins
5. Where We're Going Next: Let's Start Building Apps

---

3. **Part I. Getting Started with Flutter**

---

1. **1. Making Your First Flutter App**

---

1. Get Familiar with Dart Syntax and Flutter Classes
2. Give the App Your Personal Touch
3. Where We're Going Next

2. **2. Laying Out More Widgets**

---

1. Introducing Layout Widgets
2. Contain and Add Padding to Widgets Using Invisible Layout Widgets
3. Add Your Own Assets to the App
4. Displaying Images
5. Vertical Layout
6. Horizontal Layout: The Row

7. [Making Grids](#)
8. [The Card](#)
9. [Fill the Space Available in the View Using Expanded](#)
10. [Slivers, Custom Scrollables, and Collapsible App Bars](#)
11. [The Key](#)
12. [Where We're Going Next](#)

### 3. **Building a Calculator App**

---

1. [Importing Basic Dependencies](#)
2. [Writing main](#)
3. [The Calculator's Home Page](#)
4. [How the App Will Be Structured](#)
5. [Implement the Basic Layout](#)
6. [Let's Give the Calculator a Screen](#)
7. [Add the Deletion Row](#)
8. [The Third Row](#)
9. [Why a GridView Wouldn't Work](#)
10. [Make the App Look and Work Right with Expanded](#)
11. [The Finished Layout](#)
12. [Implement the Calculations](#)
13. [Use the Calculation Inside the App](#)
14. [Wrapping Up the Calculator](#)
15. [What If We Try to Divide by 0?](#)
16. [Where We're Going Next](#)

## 4. **Beyond the Standard Library:**

### 4. **Plugins and Packages**

---

1. [An Introduction to Packages](#)
2. [Package Usage Example](#)
3. [Making Your Own Packages](#)

4. [Publishing a Package to Pub](#)
5. [Packages for Windows, macOS, and Linux](#)
6. [Where We're Going Next](#)

---

## 4. **Part II. Doing More with Flutter**

---

### 1. **5. Network and Storage I/O and Navigation**

---

1. [The API](#)
2. [The http Package](#)
3. [Writing Methods to Fetch Comics](#)
4. [What You Need to Build the UI: Navigation and the InheritedWidget](#)
5. [Build the App's Basic UI](#)
6. [Building the Comic Page](#)
7. [Using the CircularProgressIndicator](#)
8. [Making Everything Faster by Caching to Local Storage](#)  
[Allowing the User to Click the Image and Go to the Website:](#)
9. [The url\\_launcher Package](#)
10. [Adding Comic Selection by Number](#)
11. [Permanent Data I/O in Flutter: Adding "Starred" Comics](#)
12. [Where We're Going Next](#)

### 2. **6. Testing and Debugging Flutter Apps**

---

1. [Testing](#)
2. [Testing the XKCD App: Using Mock Objects](#)
3. [Throwing and Catching Exceptions](#)
4. [Assert Statements](#)
5. [Where We're Going Next](#)

### 3. **7. Build a Chat App Using Firebase**

---

1. [What Is Firebase?](#)



2. Animations and Transitions
3. Custom Shapes and Drawing in Flutter Apps Using Painters
4. The StreamBuilder
5. Building the Chat App
6. Where You're Going Next

## 5. **A1. Introduction to Dart**

---

1. Comments in Dart
2. Variables and Conditions
3. Functions
4. main
5. Asynchronous Code in Dart: The dart:async Library
6. Conditional Constructs and Expressions
7. Loops: while, do while, and for
8. Classes
9. Typedef and Callbacks
10. Mastering import
11. Conversion Between Native Java/Apple and Dart Data Types
12. Where You're Going Next

## **A2. Apple-Like Look and Additional**

### 6. **App Configuration**

---

1. Cupertino Widgets
2. pubspec.yaml
3. Platform-Specific Setup

# Early Praise for *Programming Flutter*

I'm excited to read this book: ten years ago, I learned Android development reading a PragProg book, and this has changed my life forever. Now this book could change it again.

→ Giordano Scalzo  
iOS Senior Software Engineer, NatWest Markets

Carmine's book is a comprehensive journey into Flutter. He leads you through the basics like widgets, standard library, packages, and plugins, and helps you to understand the more advanced topics like network, I/O, navigation, testing, debugging, and firebase. His book is a reference for practical suggestions, useful tips, and solid advice, without sacrificing the details. What I liked the most is that each chapter starts with a premise, and ends with a conclusion and "where we're going next," building up a natural, logical, and consequential narrative.

→ Alessio Salvadorini  
Creative Technologist, Nokia

Great book for anyone who wants to start grasping Flutter.

→ Erdem Orman  
Software Development Engineer, Amazon

If you want or need to do cross-platform mobile app development, you should have this book at hand.

*Programming Flutter*, by Carmine Zaccagnino, walks you systematically through this important Google platform for building full apps that work with Android, iOS, and Google Fuchsia.

→ John Barry  
Independent Editorial Consultant, various

Carmine's hands-on tutorial will help you understand Flutter and why it is the best solution to target iPhones and Androids with a single codebase. Great book for a great framework!

→ Paul Freiberger  
Coauthor, *Fire in the Valley: The Birth and Death of the Personal Computer*

# Acknowledgments

This book exists because Flutter was released and such a revolutionary technology needed a way for people to know about it and learn it however they prefer. So, before even talking about the book, it's necessary to remember how good it is for the developer community that Google has released Flutter and they're continuing to invest in it to make it even more revolutionary and important every day that passes.

Talking about the book, it has to be said that working with the Pragmatic Bookshelf has been great. First of all, I want to thank Andy Hunt, who as a publisher has built a wonderful team: starting from my very first interactions with Brian MacDonald over my proposal to write this book everyone has been thorough, welcoming, and helpful.

In particular, I want to thank Michael Swaine who, as the editor of this book, has been encouraging, helpful, and understanding throughout the process, never making me feel pressured and always helping and encouraging me when any issues arose or when I had questions about anything related to the book.

When bigger and more technical issues arose, production manager Janet Furlow has fixed them, allowing me to keep working on the content of the book instead. The cover Gilson Graphics made for the book is very nice as a visual metaphor of Flutter's multi-platform nature. In addition to those I have

mentioned, I want to thank everyone else at the Pragmatic Bookshelf who has been involved in making the book as good as it is.

I want to thank everybody who has looked at the book and given me feedback, which I have taken on and tried to use to the best of my ability to make the book better for everyone. In particular, the technical reviewers who have been thorough and thoughtful in their feedback and the beta book readers who have taken their time to submit errata: it's been very important and seeing how thorough they have been has encouraged me to do as much as I could for the book. Thank you Giordano Scalzo, Alessio Salvadorini, Erdem Orman, Paul Freiburger, and John Barry.

I want to thank everyone I know informally: my friends and family have all been very encouraging and supportive and have made this journey more pleasant than it could have ever been without their support. Knowing the people close to me were happy with the fact that I was doing this was invaluable. I would also like to mention the people who were less close to me, who knew me barely or not at all previously and who have reached out to ask about the book because they made the results of my work feel like something closer to me.

# Preface

This book is about Flutter, Google's open source software development kit (SDK) that can be used to develop applications across a wide range of platforms. We'll begin by taking a brief look at its history, followed by an overview of its features and what we will see during the course of this book.

At the end of this Preface you'll find information about the installation and usage of the Flutter SDK and integrated development environment (IDE) plugins.

## A Brief History of Flutter

In 2015 Google unveiled Flutter, a new SDK based on the Dart language, as the next platform for Android development, and in 2017 an alpha version of it (0.0.6) was released to the public for the first time.

At I/O 2017 Google showed off using Flutter and its multi-platform capabilities, and continued promoting it at I/O 2018. Since then, Google has been investing in Flutter and recommending it as the way everyone should be developing mobile apps.

In December 2018 Flutter 1.0 was released and made available so that developers could begin using the SDK to make app creation easier.

At Google I/O 2019, Flutter support for desktop and web platforms was publicly announced. Tools for developing Flutter apps for Windows, macOS, Linux, and the web were released.

In addition to being unstable and untested, desktop development is being held back further by the lack of plugin support, which is very limited mostly because, at the time of writing, plugin tooling is still in the process of being developed, meaning that binaries for the platform-specific code for each platform has to be manually built and linked by editing the Google-provided [Makefiles](#) that can be found in Google's dedicated *flutter-desktop-embedding* GitHub repository.<sup>[1]</sup>

On the other hand, web support is progressing quickly and

shouldn't take much more than a rebuild of a working Flutter mobile project that doesn't have any native plugins or platform-specific code.



## Why Flutter Matters and What We'll See in This Book

Flutter's entry into the mobile app development framework space is recent and, because of that, Flutter needs to carry significant improvements over existing frameworks and SDKs to actually be useful—and it does.

For one thing, with Flutter you'll be able to develop apps that work with Android, iOS, and Google Fuchsia,<sup>[2]</sup> (which might replace Android and/or Chrome OS at some point in the future). Flutter is developed by Google, but it fully supports iOS, and this means you can now also run an iOS emulator and build for iOS in Android Studio. However, you won't be able to build iOS apps on Linux or Windows because iOS emulation and compilation is still done through Xcode.

Flutter makes developing apps incredibly easy by allowing you to define the app's UI declaratively but in the same place and language you define the app logic (no XML UI files required). You can instantly preview the changes you make to your app using stateful hot reload.

Additionally, its cross-platform nature doesn't skimp on having a native look and feel, as the framework supports all of the typical native features of each of the operating systems (different app bar, different list drag to update, Material Design and Apple icons, etc.). The advantages compared to other cross-platform frameworks don't end there: you'll be able to run any native Kotlin/Java and Swift/Objective-C method using platform channels, as we'll see in *Integrating Native Code: Making Plugin Packages*.

Even though it's really new, Flutter is already used by some big and established companies (as well as many smaller ones) to build cross-platform mobile apps, as you can see in Google's Flutter Showcase Page.<sup>[3]</sup>

We'll be using Flutter packages and plugins (many of them developed by Google) to build ever more useful apps, also introducing more advanced standard Flutter features such as navigation and animations.

## Don't Know Dart? Don't Worry About It

You might want to read Appendix 1, *Introduction to Dart* if you don't have much programming experience or find even the first chapter difficult to follow because of Dart's syntax; many Dart-specific constructs will be explained during the course of the book, but you might want to consider going through that appendix first if you find yourself struggling to understand the code.

## Installing the SDK and the IDE Plugins

To use Flutter, you need to install its SDK, and to be able to get on with your programming in a quick and uncomplicated manner, you'll probably want to install the IDE tools too.

If you prefer to use the command line (maybe because you want to use other, perhaps lighter, IDEs or text editors) there will be guidance on the usage of the [flutter](#) command throughout the book.

### INSTALLING FLUTTER

The installation process for the Flutter SDK differs slightly for each operating system, so I'll separate the instructions into three sections. Skip ahead to the instructions specific to your platform and, if you want to install them, the part that covers IDE plugin installation.

At the time of writing, the latest stable version is 1.9.1 and requires a 495MB download on Linux (tar.xz archive), a 655MB download on Windows (zip archive), or a 786MB download on macOS (zip archive).

#### Installing on Linux

On a Linux machine only Android development is supported, so we will install just the Android SDK and the Flutter SDK itself. You'll receive guidance for both CLI and graphical installation methods.

#### Installing the Android SDK on Linux

If you have never developed Android apps, you need to install the Android SDK, which includes the tools needed to build

and debug Android apps.

In order to use Flutter, you need to install Android Studio and the Android SDK tools. Flutter requires Android Studio to be installed, but you don't have to use it for development.

#### Alternatives to the Official Zip File



On Gentoo and Arch Linux you can use packages to install the Android SDK and/or Android Studio:

- 

On Gentoo, you can install the Android Studio package<sup>[4]</sup> by running `emerge --ask dev-util/android-studio`;

- 

For Arch Linux there is an actively maintained and popular package available on the AUR called *android-studio*<sup>[5]</sup>.

Start by heading over to the downloads page on the Android Developers page:<sup>[6]</sup> there you'll find links for the .zip download of Android Studio (around 1GB in size).

Regardless of what you choose, you might need to install some 32-bit libraries to make the SDK work on a 64-bit operating system:

- On Debian/Ubuntu, run `sudo apt install libc6:i386 libncurses5:i386 libstdc++6:i386 lib32z1 libbz2-1.0:i386`
- On Fedora, run `sudo dnf install zlib.i686 ncurses-libs.i686 bzip2-libs.i686`.

After that, we're ready to actually install the Android SDK.

To do that using the full Android Studio installer, after extracting the zip file you downloaded from Google's website, run the `studio.sh` script contained in the `bin` subdirectory. This will start a setup wizard. After you complete the setup of the SDK you can launch Android Studio by running that same `studio.sh` script.

## Installing the Flutter SDK on Linux

This part will provide guidance for Linux installation aimed at beginners; if you are comfortable with the command line the CLI steps will be more predictable. (For complete Linux newbies it might be easier to follow GUI-oriented guidance since that's usually more familiar.)

### Alternatives to the Tarball



There are alternatives to installing the official tarball:

- Arch Linux has an actively maintained package in the AUR to install Flutter.<sup>[7]</sup>

The Linux download is a source tarball that also contains the script needed to run the `flutter` command, which means you just need to extract it and add the `bin` subdirectory of the extracted tarball to the `PATH` environment variable.

Before we can do that, we need to browse to the SDK archive<sup>[8]</sup> page on Flutter's official website and download the latest stable version.

Alternatively, in a CLI-only environment, you can download the 1.2.1 tarball using `curl`

```
https://storage.googleapis.com/flutter_infra/releases/stable/linux/flutter_linux_v1.2.1-stable.tar.xz -o flutter_linux_v1.2.1-stable.tar.xz.
```

Extract the tarball you just downloaded with any GUI tool of your liking or by running the following command:

```
$ tar -xf flutter_linux_v1.2.1-stable.tar.xz
```

Now we need to add the executable script to the `PATH` environment variable.

Before doing this, you need to take note of the directory where you extracted the tarball. It contains a `flutter` directory, inside which there is a `bin` directory; we need to know the path to reach that `bin` directory.

If you are using the GUI, in most distribution it is available by browsing the directory's properties. It will be something along the lines of `/home/username/Downloads/flutter_linux_v1.9.1-stable/flutter/bin` if you have gone with the default settings for each piece of software used in the steps we described earlier. I suggest moving this to a more permanent path; ideally one at which you'll remember you have installed Flutter.

If you worked in the CLI using the commands just outlined, browse to your Flutter installation directory and then change the working directory to the [flutter/bin](#) subdirectory by running:

```
$ cd flutter/bin
```

and get the working directory by running:

```
$ pwd
```

which will return something along the lines of [/home/username/flutter/bin](#) (here you'll see the path where you installed Flutter, so your mileage may vary significantly).

### Know Your Shell



This section supposes that your shell is Bash.<sup>[9]</sup>  
This is the case for most Linux distributions (and Unix-like operating systems in general—some exceptions are the BSDs, which have tcsh,<sup>[10]</sup> ksh,<sup>[11]</sup> or ash,<sup>[12]</sup> and Arch Linux's installer, which runs on Zsh<sup>[13]</sup> but installs Bash by default) and, since you would need to manually install and configure a different one, you probably would know how to add a directory to its [PATH](#).

To add this to the [PATH](#) environment variable, we need to edit [~/.bash\\_profile](#).

To do that using the GUI, you first need your file manager to display hidden files. If you can't find a file named [.bash\\_profile](#) in your home directory, you need to toggle the option that makes the file manager show hidden files, and this depends on the file manager that you're using:



- In Nautilus (a.k.a. GNOME Files, default in most distributions using the GNOME desktop like Ubuntu, RHEL, Fedora, and default SLED and Debian) you need to press **Ctrl + H**. This shortcut also works in PCManFM (part of the LXDE, as found in Lubuntu), Caja (part of Mate), and Thunar (part of the XFCE desktop, as found in Xubuntu).
- If you are using the KDE desktop (for example when running Kubuntu or when choosing it when installing distributions like openSUSE or Debian) and its default Dolphin file manager, use **Alt + +**.

Once you have located a file called `.bash_profile`, open it with any text editor and add the following line to the end of it, in a new line:

```
export PATH=$PATH:/home/username/etc
```

where you'll replace `/home/username/etc` with the string you took note of earlier.

If you prefer using the command line or just want a copy-paste experience from this installation guide, you can instead open a terminal window or TTY and run the following command:

```
$ echo "export PATH=$PATH:/home/username/etc" >> ~/.bash_profile
```

replacing `/home/username/etc` with the path you found earlier for the extracted tarball's `flutter/bin` directory.

To actually be able to run the `flutter` command, you need to refresh your terminal's configuration by running:

```
$ source ~/.bash_profile
```

### Installing on Windows

Just like on Linux, Windows-only Android development is supported, so we will install just the Android SDK with Android Studio and the Flutter SDK itself.

### Installing the Android SDK on Windows

All you need to do to install the Android SDK on Windows is to download and run the Android Studio installation file available on the official download page.<sup>[14]</sup> This will also install the feature-rich Android Studio IDE. After installing Android Studio, you will be guided through the installation of the Android SDK.

## **Installing the Flutter SDK on Windows**

To install the Flutter SDK on Windows you need to install Git for Windows first. You can find the installation file for it on its official download page.<sup>[15]</sup> During installation, you need to choose the *Use Git from the Windows Command Prompt* option.

After you have installed Git, download the latest version of Flutter from its official installation page.<sup>[16]</sup> This, unlike what happens with most of the software available for Windows, will download a zip archive (a.k.a. a compressed folder) that contains a `flutter` folder: extract it wherever you want (this will be the SDK folder any IDE plugin will ask you to enter).

If you want to run a command on the Flutter Console, run the `flutter.bat` script contained in the `bin` subfolder.

## **Installing on macOS**

The advantage macOS has is that it also supports iOS building and debugging. To take advantage of that, we also need to install Xcode and the iOS SDK.

## **Installing Xcode and the iOS SDK**

To be able to run Flutter and use it for iOS development you need to download Xcode<sup>[17]</sup> and the iOS SDK<sup>[18]</sup> from Apple's official website.

## Installing the Android SDK on macOS

Installing the Android SDK on macOS is really simple: head over to the Android Studio downloads page<sup>[19]</sup> to download the .dmg file that also includes the feature-rich but resource intensive Android Studio IDE.

## Installing the Flutter SDK on macOS

Installing Flutter on macOS is very similar to installing Flutter on Linux. The main differences are that macOS uses the zip archive format instead of the more efficient tar.xz format, and there are no OS or GUI differences among distributions to contend with.

Start by downloading the latest stable .zip from Flutter's official website.<sup>[20]</sup>

Unzip it to any directory, then open the `flutter` directory you just extracted. Press `⌘ + I` and take note of the path that appears to the right of *Where:*.

Now, open a Terminal window and run the command:

```
$ nano ~/.bash_profile
```

After doing that, paste the following in the terminal window:

```
export PATH=$PATH:/example/path/to/flutter/bin
```

replacing `/example/path/to/flutter/bin` with the path you took note of earlier.

All that's left to do is to close the file using `Ctrl-X` and confirming you want to save the file by pressing `Y`.

To actually be able to run the `flutter` command, you need to

refresh your terminal's configuration by running:

```
$ source ~/.bash_profile
```

## INSTALLING THE IDE PLUGINS

The Flutter IDE plugins for VSCode and Android Studio are installed using the canonical installation tools and techniques for each IDE. They also require the installation of the respective Dart plugin.

If you're not familiar with that process, we'll now discuss how to install the Flutter plugin on each IDE.

### VSCode

To install the Flutter plugin for Visual Studio Code you need to open Visual Studio Code itself, then use the keyboard shortcut **Ctrl** - **Shift** - **P** to open the command palette, then type "Install extensions" and press **Enter**.

On the panel that opens up on the left, type Flutter and press **Enter**.

Click the Install button in the Flutter entry in the list, this will install both the Flutter and the Dart plugins.

Unlike the Flutter plugin for Android Studio, the Flutter plugin for Visual Studio Code plugin will auto-detect the location where the Flutter SDK is installed.

### Android Studio

To install the Flutter plugin for Android Studio you need to navigate to File > Settings > Plugins, click *Browse repositories...*, type Flutter and click Install.

To create a Flutter Project in Android Studio you need to restart Android Studio if you haven't since installing the

Flutter plugin, navigate to `File > New Flutter Project`, choose *Flutter Application* and give the app a name and a path, set the package name and you're done.

## USING THE CLI AND THE PLUGINS

There are two ways of interacting with the Flutter SDK: using the `flutter` CLI command directly or through the IDE plugins. The plugins for Android Studio and VSCode are very different to use, as they adapt to the usual conventions of the respective IDE.

### Create a Flutter App Project

To create a Flutter app project, run the `flutter create appname` command or follow the procedure corresponding to the IDE you want to use to develop your app:

- In Android Studio, click on `File > New > New Flutter Project...` and follow the instructions that will appear on screen;
- In Visual Studio Code, hit `Ctrl + Shift + P` to open the Command Menu and type `New Project`, *Flutter: New Project* should appear as an option in the menu, click on it and then type a name for your app project.

### Building and Running

You can build a Flutter app using the `flutter build` command when the working directory is the project's root directory (where `pubspec.yaml` is located):

- To build an APK for your app (standard Android installation file), use `flutter build apk`.
- To build an iOS application bundle, use `flutter build ios`.
- To build an Android App Bundle (the new generation Android installation file that reduces file size), use `flutter build appbundle`.

If you want to run the app directly on an open emulator or a device connected by USB (with USB Debugging turned on in

the device's settings), use `flutter run`.

If you're using an IDE, you can use the Flutter plugin to run apps directly from the IDE.

To run an app on an open emulator or connected USB device:

- Using VSCode, press **F5** or click on *Debug > Start Debug*.
- Using Android Studio, press **Shift** - **F10** and click the button that looks like the one highlighted in the following image:

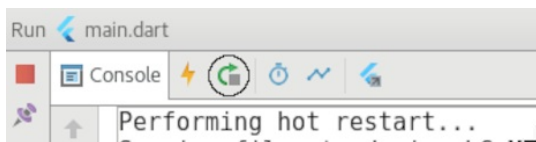


### Hot Reload

Flutter comes with a feature you might know from other frameworks: hot reload. If you're not familiar with it, the hot reload feature allows you to update the app's current view based on changes you've made to the code without rebuilding the entire app which, as anyone who has ever tried knows, is very painful when you are making many small changes and trying to see how they affect the app.

This feature is accessible in both Android Studio and Visual Studio Code and, actually, also in the command line when you run an app using `flutter run`: pressing **R** in the terminal when that command is running will reload the app.

In Android Studio you need to find an icon like this in the *Run* menu at the bottom:



In Visual Studio Code you need to find an icon like this in the menu that appears at the top of the screen when you start

debugging:



The app will immediately reload, showing any changes you've made to the app's code immediately on the connected emulator or device.

If you're running a recent version of Android Studio and/or Visual Studio Code, you'll have IDE access to two different but similar features: stateful hot reload and hot restart. The difference between the two is that the stateful hot reload (as the name implies) preserves each of the `State` objects and is faster, but it won't work with bigger changes that require those to be reloaded too, and for that there's hot restart.

When running an app using `flutter run` from the CLI, stateful hot reload is associated to the lowercase `r` character, while hot restart is achieved with the uppercase `R` character.

In both IDEs you'll find, next to the button shown above, a lightning bolt icon like the one you can see in the following VSCode screenshot:



The lightning bolt performs the stateful hot reload, while the typical *restart* icon performs the hot restart.

### Updating and Maintaining Your Flutter Installation

You'll know when you need to update your Flutter SDK installation because you'll get a notice whenever you build or run an app.

To update your Flutter installation you need to run the `flutter upgrade` command, which will check and download anything

that's needed using Git, so you need to have Git installed.

Flutter includes a tool called Flutter Doctor, available using the `flutter doctor` command, which will list information about the installed Flutter version, the Android/iOS SDK, the IDE plugins, and connected devices.

#### **Other Flutter-Related Commands in the VSCode Plugins**

Once the VSCode Flutter plugin is installed, opening the command palette and typing `flutter` will show all available commands.

Among these you'll want to get familiar with:

*Flutter: Run Flutter Doctor*

Check if there are dependencies that need to be installed.

*Flutter: New Project*

Creates a new Flutter project.

*Flutter: Select Device*

Select the device on which you want to debug your app.

*Flutter: Get Packages and Flutter: Upgrade Packages*

Commands for interacting with Flutter Packages (we'll discuss packages in Chapter 4).



## Where We're Going Next: Let's Start Building Apps

Now that you're set up with all you need to build Flutter apps, we can start building apps.

You can begin by creating a new Flutter project and familiarizing yourself with the files generated by the SDK as well as the IDE's UI for managing Flutter projects. Once you feel comfortable working with it, you can move on to the first chapter, in which we'll learn the structure of a Flutter app and how to implement it.

---

### Footnotes

- [1] <https://github.com/google/flutter-desktop-embedding>
- [2] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google\\_Fuchsia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Google_Fuchsia)
- [3] <https://flutter.dev/showcase>
- [4] <https://packages.gentoo.org/packages/dev-util/android-studio>
- [5] <https://aur.archlinux.org/packages/android-studio/>
- [6] <https://developer.android.com/studio#downloads>
- [7] <https://aur.archlinux.org/packages/flutter/>
- [8] <https://flutter.dev/docs/development/tools/sdk/archive?tab=linux>
- [9] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bash\\_\(Unix\\_shell\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bash_(Unix_shell))
- [10] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tcsh>
- [11] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/KornShell>
- [12] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Almquist\\_shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Almquist_shell)
- [13] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Z\\_shell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Z_shell)
- [14] <https://developer.android.com/studio#downloads>

- [15] <https://git-scm.com/download/win>
- [16] <https://flutter.dev/docs/development/tools/sdk/archive>
- [17] <https://developer.apple.com/xcode/>
- [18] <https://developer.apple.com/ios/>
- [19] <https://developer.android.com/studio#downloads>
- [20] <https://flutter.dev/docs/development/tools/sdk/archive?tab=macos>

## Part 1

# Getting Started with Flutter

---

*Even though Flutter is very easy to pick up, we need to actually know what it can do for us and how it's done.*

*That's what the chapters in this part are about: you'll write your first app and in the process learn what Flutter widgets are and how they can be used to create user interfaces.*

*After that, you'll start combining more and more Flutter widgets together, and, at the end of Part I, you'll learn how to use Dart packages to get Google-developed and third-party libraries to build more apps that use features not present in Flutter's (or Dart's) standard library.*

*You'll also learn how to run methods written in native Swift/Objective-C and Kotlin/Java to interact with low-level features that would otherwise be inaccessible in Flutter.*

---

## Chapter 1

# Making Your First Flutter App

Let's get started actually writing some code and making apps to learn what you can do with Flutter.

## Get Familiar with Dart Syntax and Flutter Classes

In this first section of the chapter, we'll take a look at the Flutter CLI's example code, review how to work with Dart code, and learn the basics of Flutter app architecture and implementation.

To create a new Flutter app, create a directory to contain the app's source code and, inside it, another directory called `lib`. The `lib` directory is where we'll add our Dart files defining what our app looks like and what our app does.

For now we won't work in the CLI, but once we're ready to build the app we will use `flutter create` to generate the files that are necessary for the app to build (which you'll get to know and edit in the appendix about app configuration). In addition to the files and directories directly related to Flutter and your app, the root of your Flutter app must also contain an `android` and an `ios` directory containing the configuration for the build system for each platform.

Inside the `lib` directory, create a file called `main.dart`.

Outside `lib`, create a file called `pubspec.yaml` and paste this in it:

```
firstapp/pubspec.yaml
```

```
name: flutter_example_name
description: Example description of a flutter app that makes
           great things happen.

dependencies:
  flutter:
    sdk: flutter
```

```
dev_dependencies:  
  flutter_test:  
    sdk: flutter  
  
flutter:  
  uses-material-design: true
```

The [pubspec.yaml](#) file contains information about your project and its dependencies, which Flutter will need to build your app. Actually this file is required for any Dart package, but it'll take a while and a few chapters before we start looking at Dart packages that aren't Flutter apps.

Inside [main.dart](#), write the following:

[firstapp\\_starting/lib/main.dart](#)

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';  
  
void main() => runApp(MyApp());  
  
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return MaterialApp(  
      title: 'Flutter Demo',  
      theme: ThemeData(  
        primarySwatch: Colors.blue,  
      ),  
      home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),  
    );  
  }  
}  
  
class MyHomePage extends StatefulWidget {  
  MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);  
  final String title;  
  
  @override  
  _MyHomePageState createState() => _MyHomePageState();  
}  
  
class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage> {  
  int _counter = 0;  
  
  void _incrementCounter() {  
    setState(() {  
      _counter++;  
    });  
  }  
}
```

```

}
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text(widget.title),
    ),

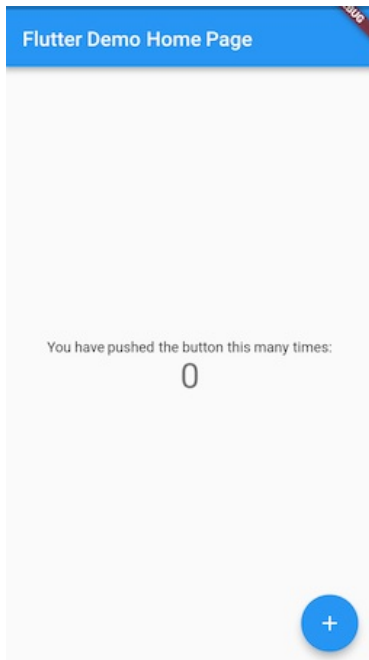
```

```

    body: Center(
      child: Column(
        mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
        children: <Widget>[
          Text(
            'You have pushed the button this many times:',
          ),
          Text(
            '$_counter',
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
          ),
        ],
      ),
    floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
      onPressed: _incrementCounter,
      tooltip: 'Increment',
      child: Icon(Icons.add),
    ),
  );
}
}

```

You'll get a simple view with a counter and a floating action button which, when clicked, increments a counter that is shown at the center of the view, like in this screenshot:



If the app doesn't work, try running:

```
$ flutter create .
```

As mentioned in the Preface, `flutter create` is the command used to create Flutter app projects, and executing it with a directory containing Flutter code will create the files and directories necessary for the app to compile for Android and iOS (and, as they become more stable, will also include the files needed for desktop development).

Keep in mind that you can fix most build problems not caused by errors in the code, especially after multiple builds, by running:

```
$ flutter clean
```

which will delete build files left by previous builds.

## ANALYZE THE EXAMPLE CODE

Let's break down this code so that you can understand this example.

### The `main.dart` File



`pubspec.yaml` file

Before moving on to `main.dart`, which contains the main app code, we should take a brief look at the `pubspec.yaml` file, which we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 4, *Beyond the Standard Library: Plugins and Packages* and, in even greater detail, in Appendix 2, *Apple-Like Look and Additional App Configuration*.

It is important to understand that the `pubspec.yaml` file is not unique to Flutter apps: it is a feature of Dart packages and, as such, also contains all the information needed to make it a Flutter app.

In the first part we'll specify some metadata about the Flutter app. In this section, two attributes are set:

- The `name`, which is the Dart package name and it is the default app name that appears on the home screen or the app drawer. The one drawback with `name` is that it must be all lowercase and be a valid Dart identifier: it can't start with a digit, it can't contain any character other than letters and underscores (no spaces allowed) and it can't be a Dart keyword (like `class`, `if`, `try`, etc.). Thus, it is recommended to edit the app files in the `android` and `ios` directories, as explained in *Platform-Specific Setup*, if you want an app name that doesn't fit within those restrictions and if you want to change the launcher icon.
- The `description`, which should be a brief, sentence or two explanation of the Flutter app.

In order to avoid build issues and as general good practice, the name of the directory that contains the root of the project (the `lib` directory and the `pubspec.yaml` file) should be the same as the Dart package name.

firstapp/pubspec.yaml

```
name: flutter_example_name
description: Example description of a flutter app that makes
```

*great things happen.*

The rest of the file specifies the dependencies.

firstapp/pubspec.yaml

```
dependencies:  
  flutter:  
    sdk: flutter  
  
dev_dependencies:  
  flutter_test:  
    sdk: flutter  
  
flutter:  
  uses-material-design: true
```

Since we are not using any third-party packages, we are just specifying the Flutter SDK itself as a dependency and, with the lines:

```
flutter:  
  uses-material-design: true
```

we make sure that Material Design (Google/Android style) assets like icons are included.

### The App Widget

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';
```

This brings in the Flutter classes we need to use. In this chapter you'll learn about the simplest ones and how to work with them (we'll look at many others as we continue in Chapter 2, *Laying Out More Widgets* as well).

```
void main() => runApp(new MyApp());
```

This line means that, when our code gets executed, we will start an app, and this app's behavior and appearance is specified inside a class called `MyApp`, which is defined as:

firstapp\_starting/lib/main.dart

```
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return MaterialApp(
      title: 'Flutter Demo',
      theme: ThemeData(
        primarySwatch: Colors.blue,
      ),
      home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),
    );
  }
}
```

Let's break this down further.

### Defining Widgets in Flutter

```
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget
```

In Flutter every UI element or collection of UI elements is a widget, which is an immutable object. This means we can't change a widget's member variables: if there are any, they have to be declared as [final](#) or constant. You can find more information on Dart variables in [Variables and Conditions](#).

There are two kinds of widgets:

- Stateless widgets (subclasses of [StatelessWidget](#)), which get rendered when the app starts and when a parent widget gets re-rendered, like [MyApp](#).
- Stateful widgets (subclasses of [StatefulWidget](#)), which you can re-render at any time by calling the [setState\(\)](#) function, like this app's [MyHomePage](#), which is covered in [The Home Page Widget](#).

The app widget is the collection of every other widget, so it is a widget. In this case it is a [StatelessWidget](#).

### Working with Stateless Widgets

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return MaterialApp(
```

```
title: 'Flutter Demo',  
theme: ThemeData(  
  primarySwatch: Colors.blue,  
),  
home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),  
);  
}
```

This is the build method, which gets called when the widget needs to be rendered and returns a [Widget](#) object, which is every widget's superclass.

In this case it gets called just once: when the app starts, given that [MyApp](#) doesn't have a parent widget (it is every other widget's parent widget).

In [MyApp](#)'s build method it is specified that the [MyApp](#) widget (the app itself) is a [MaterialApp](#), which means that our app will use Material Design features that are part of the standard library.

The code sets, using the [MaterialApp](#) constructor, an app title, a theme with a primary swatch (a range of similar colors, as specified in Google's Material Design guidelines), and a home page, which will be of class [MyHomePage](#) and have the title "Flutter Demo Home Page".

### The Home Page Widget

This defines the aforementioned [MyHomePage](#) class, which is a [StatefulWidget](#) (a widget that has a state, unlike [MyApp](#)) with a title member and a state, which is [\\_MyHomePageState](#):

firstapp\_starting/lib/main.dart

```
class MyHomePage extends StatefulWidget {  
  MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);  
  final String title;  
  
  @override  
  _MyHomePageState createState() => _MyHomePageState();  
}
```

```
}
```

In Dart, the underscore (\_) in `_MyHomePageState` has an effect akin to the one `private` has in languages like Java and is explained in *[The underscore](#)*.

## The Advantage of Stateful Widgets

Stateful widgets have the ability to be re-rendered programmatically, allowing the developer to build an app that reacts to changes in the data it is showing or representing.

Because of this, they are more complex than stateless widgets: a stateful widget has a state, which is represented by a `State` object, which contains the widget's logic and mutable data. As I mentioned in the previous section, widgets themselves are immutable, so they need a different object (the `State`) to hold the mutable data.

They get re-rendered when you call the `setState()` function, which notifies the framework that the state of the widget has changed and it needs to be re-rendered (by calling its `build` method again) to show the changes to the user.

## The MyHomePage Widget

The line:

```
MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);
```

defines `MyHomePage`'s arguments (as explained in *[Constructors](#)*). Since they are wrapped in braces, they are named arguments, which is why, when calling `MyHomePage`'s constructor, the syntax was:

```
MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page')
```

The unused key parameter is used by the framework to identify which widgets to re-render. You can provide it and it can be useful, but it's optional, and we won't need it for this app.

We'll talk about keys in the next chapter in *The Key*.

You can find more information on Dart class and constructor definitions in *Classes*.

Inside `_MyHomePageState` is where the app's logic is defined:

firstapp\_starting/lib/main.dart

```
class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage> {
  int _counter = 0;

  void _incrementCounter() {
    setState(() {
      _counter++;
    });
  }
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(
        title: Text(widget.title),
      ),
      body: Center(
        child: Column(
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
          children: <Widget>[
            Text(
              'You have pushed the button this many times:',
            ),
            Text(
              '$_counter',
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
            ),
          ],
        ),
      ),
      floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
        onPressed: _incrementCounter,
        tooltip: 'Increment',
```

```

        child: Icon(Icons.add),
      ),
    );
  }
}

```

```
class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage>
```

`_MyHomePageState` is defined as the state of the widget `MyHomePage`.

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```

int _counter = 0;

void _incrementCounter() {
  setState(() {
    _counter++;
  });
}

```

This declares a counter and defines a function that increments the counter and triggers a re-render by changing the state of the widget (calling `setState()`).

## The Main build Method for the Home Page

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text(widget.title),
    ),
    body: Center(
      child: Column(
        mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
        children: <Widget>[
          Text(
            'You have pushed the button this many times:',
          ),
          Text(
            '$_counter',
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
          ),
        ],
      ),
    ),
  );
}

```

```
    ],  
  ),  
),
```

```
floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(  
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,  
  tooltip: 'Increment',  
  child: Icon(Icons.add),  
),  
);  
}
```

## Use of a Widget to Provide the Basic App Structure: The Scaffold

This time the widget we return is a [Scaffold](#), the basic Material Design visual layout structure; in other words, it is a generic container for all of our app content.

A [Scaffold](#) has an [AppBar](#), which (using a [Text](#) widget) displays the title which was set earlier in [MyHomePage](#)'s constructor.

## Build the App's Body

The body of our [Scaffold](#) is wrapped inside a [Center](#) widget, which centers our content in the middle of the page.

The [Center](#)'s child (the content which it centers) is a [Column](#), which displays its children in a vertical stack.

The first [Text](#) widget simply displays a [String](#), whereas the second displays the counter with a built-in theme called [display1](#).

## Add the Floating Action Button

Not centered (but inside the [Scaffold](#), outside the body, in its own [floatingActionButton](#) attribute) is the [FloatingActionButton](#) which,



when pressed, calls the `_incrementCounter` function we saw previously.

Quite easy to understand are the tooltip code and the `Icon` widget (again, everything is a widget here) inside of it (its “child”) which is a simple plus (or “add”, as it is called) sign.

Every time we click the FAB the counter is incremented and the state changes, the `setState()` call triggers the `build` method again and the UI gets reloaded with the updated counter.

## WHAT WE’VE SEEN AND WHERE WE’RE GOING

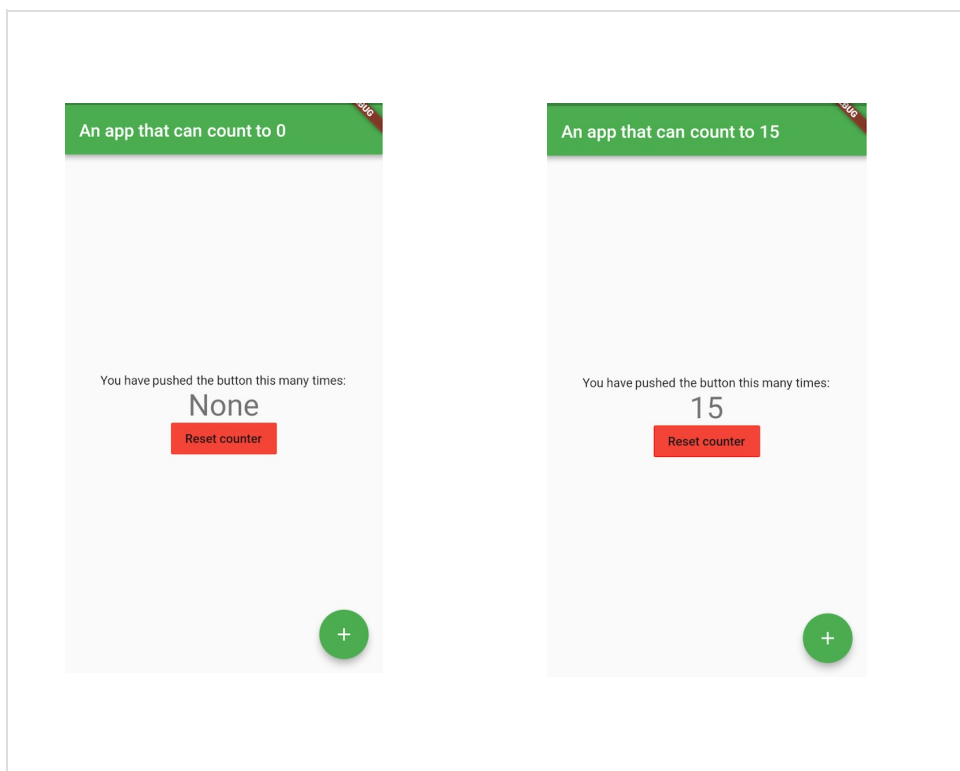
This is a very simple app: it’s just a `MaterialApp` that contains a `Scaffold`, with a simple FAB in the lower right and, in the middle, a `Column` with two `Text` widgets showing the number of times the FAB has been clicked.

This is very simple, but the only way to really understand how something is done is by doing it, so the next section is going to focus on adding new features to the existing code.

## Give the App Your Personal Touch

Now let's modify what we've seen. We'll change the app color to be green, add a red reset button to reset the counter to 0, make the app display the string "None" instead of the counter when the counter is at 0 and change the `AppBar`'s title text. In doing this, we'll get a feel for how to make simple changes, and also an introduction to more complex Flutter syntax.

The result will look like this:



### CHANGE THE APP'S PRIMARY COLOR

We'll start editing our app with the simplest change: changing the color to green. This is as simple as changing the following few lines in `MyApp`'s `build` method:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
theme: ThemeData(  
  primarySwatch: Colors.blue,  
),
```

Go ahead and change `Colors.blue` to `Colors.green` so that those lines instead read as follows:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
theme: ThemeData(  
  primarySwatch: Colors.green,  
),
```

## MAKE THE COUNTER DISPLAY “NONE” INSTEAD OF 0

Now, let’s change the counter text in the middle so that it displays “None” instead of 0.

To do this, we’ll add a `_displayedString` variable to `_MyHomePageState`, below the counter’s declaration.

Locate the following line:

```
int _counter = 0;
```

and, below it, add:

```
String _displayedString;
```

After we’ve done that, we need to set this variable to “None” if the counter is 0 and to a string representation of the counter if that isn’t the case. We’re going to need a conditional.

### Use Conditionals in Flutter

To do this every time the counter is increased (which we do using a call to `setState` that triggers a re-render that calls the `build` method), this needs to be part of `_MyHomePageState`’s `build` method. So, just above:

```
return new Scaffold(
```

add:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
if(_counter == 0) {  
  _displayedString = "None";  
} else {  
  _displayedString = _counter.toString();  
}
```

This is a simple `if-else` construct and, like in many other languages, it could also be expressed in a braceless way as:

```
if(_counter == 0) _displayedString = "None";  
else _displayedString = _counter.toString();
```

or, with a conditional expression, as:

```
_displayedString = _counter == 0 ? "None" : '$_counter';
```

You can find more information about conditional constructs and expressions in [\*Conditional Constructs and Expressions\*](#).

## SET THE COUNTER TEXT

Now we need to replace the counter with the string we've just generated.

### Use String Literals in Dart

At the moment, the code we're using to generate the `Text` widget for the counter looks like this:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
Text(  
  '$_counter',  
  style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,  
),
```

You might have noticed the syntax currently used to display the counter to the user:

```
'$_counter'
```

The single quotes (unlike in C, C++, and Java, single and double quotes are the same in Dart) enclose a string literal, and inside this string literal is a variable name (`_counter`) preceded by a dollar sign.

### Use String Interpolation

In this case, this is an alternative to the syntax we used earlier to convert an integer to a string (`_counter.toString()`).

This is how string literals work in Dart: they are enclosed in single or double quotes. And we can include variables in string literals by preceding the variable name with a dollar sign.

If we need to use string interpolation with an expression or dot notation (for example, to use member variables of objects or display results of expressions), we need to enclose the variable name in braces. We'll need to do this shortly for the app title.

You can find more information about string literals and string interpolation in [\*Characters and Strings\*](#).

Back to our example. Since we now want to display a string, we can replace:

```
'$_counter'
```

to be just:

```
displayedString
```

since we don't need to use string literals.

## CHANGE THE APP'S TITLE

To change the appBar's title to "An app that can count to [0, 1, 2, 3...]" we need to use string interpolation.

We will use a fixed string defined in the app's constructor and a variable part, which will be created inside the build method.

The fixed part is the title we give to `MyHomePage`'s constructor (and which then becomes `widget.title`), which will be “An app that can count to”:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),  
);
```

will have to become:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
home: MyHomePage(title: 'An app that can count to'),  
);
```

Now we need to edit `_MyHomePageState`'s `build` method again, since that's what gets called every time the app's state changes, and that's where the variable part of the string will have to be generated.

To do what I just described, locate the following lines:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
appBar: AppBar(  
  title: Text(widget.title),  
),
```

and change:

```
widget.title
```

to:

```
'${widget.title} $_counter'
```

so that those lines now instead read as follows:

---

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
appBar: AppBar(  
  title: Text('${widget.title} $_counter'),  
),
```

As you can see, we've done the opposite of what we did to the counter, and we had to use braces for `widget.title` because dot notation was needed to access a member variable.

## ADD A RESET BUTTON

The last thing we need to do to get to the app in the screenshots shown earlier is to add the reset button.

Before we add the button itself, let's define a simple method that changes the state and resets the counter to 0.

### Use `setState()` to Reset the Counter

Inside `_MyHomePageState`'s definition, below `_incrementCounter()`'s definition, add the following code:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
void _resetCounter() {  
  setState() {  
    _counter = 0;  
  });  
}
```

This is very similar to `_incrementCounter()` but, instead of incrementing the counter, we set it to 0.

### Make the Reset Button

Now that we've defined a method that resets the counter and triggers a re-render, we need to create a button to call that function. So before we do that, we need to know how we do that with Flutter.

## Buttons in Flutter: The `FlatButton` and the `IconButton`

If we want to quickly create a button in Flutter we can choose between a `FlatButton` or an `IconButton`.

The `FlatButton` is ideal when you want a button that displays text: it has a `child` attribute that is usually a `Text` widget, but you have the option to set it to anything.

The reason why the `FlatButton` is used mostly for text buttons is that using an `IconButton` exists specifically for the creation of icon-based buttons, by allowing the developer to specify an `Icon` object as its `icon` attribute, with the button only consisting of the icon and a small amount of padding.

One of the attributes that show the difference in focus is that the `FlatButton`'s `color` attribute controls the color of the button itself (the background to its content), whereas the `IconButton`'s `color` attribute controls the icon's color.

A `RaisedButton` also exists, but it is just a slightly different looking `FlatButton`.

## Implement the Reset Button

For this example we'll make a `FlatButton`.

To add the button, locate the following lines in `_MyHomePageState`'s `build` method:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
children: <Widget>[
  Text(
    'You have pushed the button this many times:',
  ),
  Text(
    '$_counter',
    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
  ),
]
```



```
,  
],
```

and add, inside the square brackets, the following to the list of widgets:

`firstapp/lib/main.dart`

```
FlatButton(  
  onPressed: _resetCounter,  
  color: Colors.red,  
  child: Text(  
    "Reset counter",  
    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.button,  
  ),  
),
```

First of all, the action we want to perform is to fire the `_resetCounter` function, so we set that as the `onPressed` attribute.

The `FlatButton`'s `color` attribute should not be confused with the CSS attribute that goes by the same name: as I described earlier, it changes the button's background color, not the text color, which we'll leave black.

The `child` attribute is just a text string with the built-in button text theme.

The final code is:

`firstapp_oldfab/lib/main.dart`

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';  
  
void main() => runApp(MyApp());  
  
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return MaterialApp(  
      title: 'Flutter Demo',  
      theme: ThemeData(  
        primarySwatch: Colors.green,  
      ),  
    );  
  }  
}
```

```

    home: MyHomePage(title: 'An app that can count to'),
  );
}
}

class MyHomePage extends StatefulWidget {
  MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);
  final String title;

  @override
  _MyHomePageState createState() => _MyHomePageState();
}

class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage> {
  int _counter = 0;
  String _displayedString;

  void _incrementCounter() {
    setState(() {
      _counter++;
    });
  }

  void _resetCounter() {
    setState(() {
      _counter = 0;
    });
  }

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    if(_counter == 0) {
      _displayedString = "None";
    } else {
      _displayedString = _counter.toString();
    }

    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(
        title: Text('${widget.title} $_counter'),
      ),
      body: Center(
        child: Column(
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
          children: <Widget>[
            Text(
              'You have pushed the button this many times:',
            ),
            Text(
              _displayedString,
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,

```

```

    ),
    FlatButton(
      onPressed: _resetCounter,
      color: Colors.red,
      child: Text(
        "Reset counter",
        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.button,
      ),
    ),
  ],
),
),
floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,
  tooltip: 'Increment',
  child: Icon(Icons.add),
),
);
}
}

```

Now, build and run or reload the app and the result will be the same as the screenshots we saw earlier.

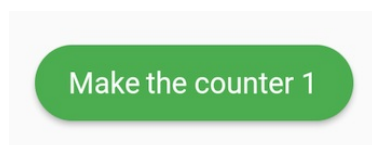
## MAKE A CUSTOM WIDGET: OUR OWN BUTTON

That `FloatingActionButton` is a default button class and it looks like a default button: it is the same as the one used in various other apps and you've probably seen it many times before.

What if, instead of using that default-looking button, we wanted to use a custom-made button to make it look exactly like we want?

### The Button We'll Create

Let's say we want to make a text button with rounded corners and a nice ink splash effect when we tap it, like the one in these pictures:



Make the counter 3

Make the counter 2

### Split Dart Code into Separate Files

First, let's create a new Dart file called `OurButton.dart` inside the `lib` directory and define our own `StatelessWidget` called `OurButton`, which will be a custom `RawMaterialButton`. In the new file, we'll import the basic Flutter API we need and define our class:

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';

class OurButton extends StatelessWidget {
}
```

### Define a Custom Widget

Now, inside `OurButton`'s curly braces, we'll define the constructor arguments and we'll set them as "required", since we need all of them and we will be setting all of them in our code:

`firstapp/lib/OurButton.dart`

```
OurButton({
  Key key,
  @required this.text,
  @required this.textColor,
  @required this.backgroundColor,
  @required this.splashColor,
  @required this.onPressed
}) : super(key: key);
```

For each of these arguments we need a variable to store them, like we do in the following lines:

`firstapp/lib/OurButton.dart`

```
final String text;
final Color textColor, backgroundColor, splashColor;
```

```
final VoidCallback onPressed;
```

Now, like for all widgets, we need a build method which, in this case, will be:

```
firstapp/lib/OurButton.dart
```

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return RawMaterialButton(
    onPressed: onPressed,
    fillColor: backgroundColor,
    splashColor: splashColor,
    padding: ButtonTheme.of(context).padding,
    child: Text(
      text,
      style: TextStyle(color: textColor),
    ),
    shape: StadiumBorder(),
  );
}
```

The button we're making is a `RawMaterialButton`, which is a bare-bones button class that allows us to customize much more of its appearance than a simpler `FlatButton`.

More specifically, the arguments we're passing to its constructor are:

- `onPressed`, which is the same as the other `onPressed` attributes we've seen, and we assign `OurButton`'s `onPressed` attribute to it.
- `fillColor`, which is the same as the `color` attribute we saw used for the `FlatButton` earlier in the chapter: it's the button's background color, which will be set to `OurButton`'s `backgroundColor` attribute, to show how our custom button's attribute names can be different when compared to those of the widget we are basing it on.
- `splashColor` is the color used for the inksplash effect and we use the `padding` argument to give a normal (default) amount of padding to our button.
- `child` is simply a `Text`, using the color specified in `OurButton`'s arguments as the text color.
- `shape` is the button's shape, and we're using a `StadiumBorder()` to give our

button the rounded corners we wanted.

The entire `OurButton.dart` source code is:

```
firstapp/lib/OurButton.dart
```

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';

class OurButton extends StatelessWidget {
  OurButton({
    Key key,
    @required this.text,
    @required this.textColor,
    @required this.backgroundColor,
    @required this.splashColor,
    @required this.onPressed
  }) : super(key: key);
  final String text;
  final Color textColor, backgroundColor, splashColor;
  final VoidCallback onPressed;
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return RawMaterialButton(
      onPressed: onPressed,
      fillColor: backgroundColor,
      splashColor: splashColor,
      padding: ButtonTheme.of(context).padding,

      child: Text(
        text,
        style: TextStyle(color: textColor),
      ),
      shape: StadiumBorder(),
    );
  }
}
```

## USE THE CUSTOM BUTTON IN OUR APP

To use our custom button in the `main.dart` file we need to import the file we just created by inserting, at the top of the file, the following:

```
import 'OurButton.dart';
```

and, in `_MyHomePageState`'s build method, replace:

```
firstapp_starting/lib/main.dart
```

```
floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(  
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,  
  tooltip: 'Increment',  
  child: Icon(Icons.add),  
),
```

with:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
floatingActionButton: OurButton(  
  text: 'Make the counter ${_counter+1}',  
  textColor: Colors.white,  
  backgroundColor: Theme.of(context).primaryColor,  
  splashColor: Theme.of(context).primaryColorLight,  
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,  
),
```

Among the arguments we're passing there is a string with the expression `_counter+1`, which requires curly braces around it.

After that, we're done!

The full `main.dart` source code is:

```
firstapp/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';  
import 'OurButton.dart';  
  
void main() => runApp(MyApp());  
  
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {  
  @override
```

```
    Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
      return MaterialApp(  
        title: 'Flutter Demo',  
        theme: ThemeData(  
          primarySwatch: Colors.green,  
        ),  
        home: MyHomePage(title: 'An app that can count to'),  
      );  
    }  
  }  
}
```

```

class MyHomePage extends StatefulWidget {
  MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);
  final String title;

  @override
  _MyHomePageState createState() => _MyHomePageState();
}

```

```

class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage> {
  int _counter = 0;
  String _displayedString;

  void _incrementCounter() {
    setState(() {
      _counter++;
    });
  }

  void _resetCounter() {
    setState(() {
      _counter = 0;
    });
  }

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    if(_counter == 0) {
      _displayedString = "None";
    } else {
      _displayedString = _counter.toString();
    }
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(
        title: Text('${widget.title} $_counter'),
      ),
      body: Center(
        child: Column(
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
          children: <Widget>[
            Text(
              'You have pushed the button this many times:',
            ),

```

```

            Text(
              _displayedString,
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
            ),
            FlatButton(
              onPressed: _resetCounter,

```



```
        color: Colors.red,
        child: Text(
          "Reset counter",
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.button,
        ),
      ),
    ],
  ),
),
floatingActionButton: OurButton(
  text: 'Make the counter ${_counter+1}',
  textColor: Colors.white,
  backgroundColor: Theme.of(context).primaryColor,
  splashColor: Theme.of(context).primaryColorLight,
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,
),
);
}
}
```

## Where We're Going Next

Now that we know how a simple Flutter app is made, how widgets are defined, and some basic Dart syntax, we can try to combine widgets to form a more complex UI composition, and that's just we'll learn to do in the next chapter.

## Chapter 2

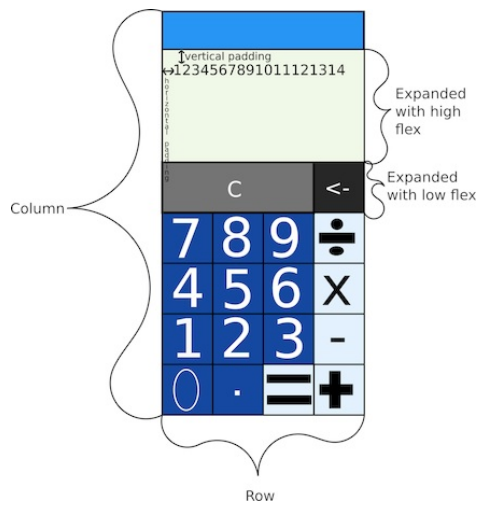
# Laying Out More Widgets

We have built a simple Flutter app starting from an example. Now it's time to start writing apps from scratch so that you'll be able to build any kind of app a client or employer might request of you. In this chapter you will learn about the different Flutter layout and content widgets, and how to add your own custom assets to Flutter apps.

After this chapter you should be able to create any Flutter layout and be able to apply the principles explained in the other feature-oriented chapters to the app you want to build.

We'll go through the different ways of laying out widgets with small examples to show them in action in a realistic context.

As an example of some of the different layout widgets that will be shown in this chapter, here are the widgets that we'll be using to build a calculator in the next chapter:



## Introducing Layout Widgets

There are multiple widgets that you can use for layout purposes, and some of them might look very similar.

Starting from the widgets needed for the example shown above and explained in the next chapter, we will obviously be citing the simple vertical and horizontal visual layout structures:

- The [Column](#), described in detail in *The Column*, which allows you to stack widgets vertically, like we did in Chapter 1. It should not be confused with the [Stack](#), which is actually used to display widgets on top of others.
- The [ListView](#), described in detail in *The ListView*, which allows you to create (potentially infinite) scrollable lists of widgets.
- The [Row](#), described in detail in *Horizontal Layout: The Row*, which allows you to display widgets side by side.
- The [GridView](#), described in detail in *The GridView*, which is used to create scrollable grids, a lot like [ListView](#)'s are used to create scrollable mono-dimensional lists.

Additionally, this chapter will cover the [Expanded](#) widget (in *Fill the Space Available in the View Using Expanded*), which is used to create [Column](#) or [Row](#) children of different sizes.

We'll also talk about [Slivers](#) (in *Slivers, Custom Scrollables, and Collapsible App Bars*), which are used for advanced scrolling, and the [Key](#) (in *The Key*), which I told you to ignore in the previous chapter.

In the next chapter, we'll combine together many of the widgets covered here (more on that in Chapter 3, *Building a Calculator App* ).

So let's begin.

We'll start with the simple and ubiquitous [Padding](#) and [Container](#), as you'll use them together with many other widgets when building apps, and then we'll talk about how to *Add Your Own Assets to the App*.

## Contain and Add Padding to Widgets Using Invisible Layout Widgets

Some widgets are not meant to add visible content to your app but instead are simply used to move other widgets inside the available space or change the shape and size of a widget in order to make the app look exactly how you want it to look.

They all operate on a [child](#) widget, and you can use them to change the shape and size of that widget or to separate the widget from other widgets.

### ADD PADDING TO A WIDGET

There might be cases in which a widget in your app has to (or should) be a certain distance away from all or some other widgets—for example, if the widget has to be separated from other widgets in a list or grid, or if there are multiple small widgets used for interaction close to each other, or maybe just because it looks better with some empty space.

The space that gets left empty is called *padding*, and is usually defined in terms of the amount of pixels for each direction that are left empty.

You can add padding to the outside of a widget by wrapping it inside a [Padding](#) widget.

[Padding](#) takes a [child](#) and the [padding](#) option as named arguments, so you can create a [Text](#) with 20px padding the following way:

```
Padding(  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  child: Text("Example text"),  
)
```

The `padding` option takes an object of type `EdgeInsetsGeometry`, which we'll learn about in the next section.

### **EdgeInsetsGeometry and EdgeInsets: Defining the Amount and Position of Padding**

You can generate objects of type `EdgeInsetsGeometry` using the following constructors of the class `EdgeInsets`:

- `EdgeInsets.all(paddingAmount)`, where `paddingAmount` is a `double` value specifying the amount of padding, which adds padding everywhere around the content.
- `EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: paddingAmountVertical, horizontal: paddingAmountHorizontal)`, where both arguments are optional and specify the amount of padding for each side in the respective axis.
- `EdgeInsets.only(top: paddingAmountTop, bottom: paddingAmountBottom, left: paddingAmountLeft, right: paddingAmountRight)`, where all four arguments are optional and specify the amount of padding for the respective side of the content.

There are other constructors for `EdgeInsets` (like `EdgeInsets.fromWindowPadding` and `EdgeInsets.fromLTRB`) but they are not really very useful with `Padding`.

`EdgeInsetsDirectional.only` and `EdgeInsetsDirectional.fromSTEB` also exist, and they are just like `EdgeInsets.only` and `EdgeInsets.fromLTRB`, but they use `start`, `top`, `bottom`, and `end` relative to the direction in which text is written and are useful when padding has to change whether the text goes from left to right (like when writing text in the Latin alphabet) or from right to left (like when writing text in the Arabic script or Hebrew alphabet).

## **THE CONTAINER AND THE BOXDECORATION**

The `Container` is a generic containment widget, and it has multiple uses, depending on the options we decide to set:

- We can choose to constrain the `child` to a set `width` and `height`.



- We can choose to add a background color to a widget or set of widgets.
- We can add [padding](#) to a widget.
- We can make the [Container](#) of a shape other than square or rectangular using [BoxDecoration](#).
- We can do all or some of these at the same time.

For example, we can create white text with a blue background and 20 pixel padding between the edges and the text, all limited to a 200x50 rectangle with the following code:

```
Container(  
  color: Colors.blue,  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  width: 200.0,  
  height: 50.0,  
  child: Text("Prova", style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)),  
)
```

### **BoxDecoration**

[BoxDecoration](#), instead, is used to determine the [Container](#)'s features.

You can assign it to the [Container](#)'s [decoration](#) option and you might be interested in the following options:

- [padding](#), which takes [EdgeInsetsGeometry](#) and is the same as [Padding.padding](#).
- [shape](#), which can be [BoxShape.circle](#) or [BoxShape.rectangle](#).
- [color](#), [image](#), or [gradient](#), which are used to specify the background, since the [BoxDecoration](#) isn't actually used just for the shape and, if you decide to use the [Container.decoration](#), you need to move arguments such as [color](#) to the [BoxDecoration](#)'s constructor.
- [borderRadius](#) which, when set for a rectangle-shaped box, creates rounded edges of the set [BorderRadius](#), which can be set as the same for all edges using [BorderRadius.circular\(radius\)](#) (where [radius](#) is a [double](#) number).

Using the following [Container](#) and [BoxDecoration](#):

---

```

Container(
  width: 300.0,
  height: 300.0,
  decoration: BoxDecoration(
    shape: BoxShape.circle,
    color: Colors.black,
  ),
  child:
    Center(
      child: Text(
        "Test Text",
        style: TextStyle(
          color: Colors.yellowAccent,
          fontSize: 30
        )
      ),
    ),
  ),
),

```

You can make a circle with yellow text in it like this:



And, just to show how they can work anywhere, you can have two in a [Column](#) (explained a bit further later in [The Column](#)) in the following way (also see the [figure](#)):

```

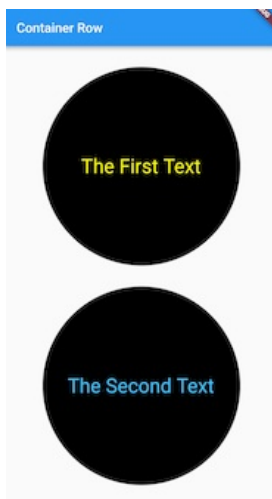
Column(
  mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceEvenly,
  children: [
    Container(
      width: 300.0,
      height: 300.0,
      decoration: BoxDecoration(
        shape: BoxShape.circle

```

```

        shape: BoxShape.circle,
        color: Colors.black,
      ),
      child: Center(
        child: Text(
          "The First Text",
          style: TextStyle(
            color: Colors.yellowAccent,
            fontSize: 30
          )
        ),
      ),
    ),
    Container(
      width: 300.0,
      height: 300.0,
      decoration: BoxDecoration(
        shape: BoxShape.circle,
        color: Colors.black,
      ),
      child: Center(
        child: Text(
          "The Second Text",
          style: TextStyle(
            color: Colors.lightBlueAccent,
            fontSize: 30
          )
        ),
      ),
    ),
  ],
),

```



More detailed examples of the usage of a [Container](#) and [BoxDecoration](#) can be found in [Make Round Widgets](#).

## Add Your Own Assets to the App

Flutter allows developers to ship files with apps to, for example, use custom icons instead of the ones provided by Flutter. You can use this feature with any kind of file.

### WHERE TO PUT THE FILES

In the root of the app's source tree (where `pubspec.yaml` resides) you'll create one or more directories and inside those directories is where you should put the files you want to ship with your app.

### EDITING PUBSPEC.YAML

Inside `pubspec.yaml`, locate a line that starts with `flutter` (if you don't have it yet, just add it at the end of the file) and, after that, indented inside it, add another called `assets`, in the following way:

```
...  
flutter:  
  assets:  
...
```

Inside it, add the directories you want to load assets from, prefaced with `-`.

For example, if you wanted to add a directory called `icons`, that would look like:

```
flutter:  
  assets:  
    - icons/
```

For multiple directories called, for example, `dir0`, `dir1`, and `dir2`, you would write something like this:

```
flutter:  
  assets:  
    - dir0/  
    - dir1/  
    - dir2/
```

## USING THE ASSETS

Assets are used in different ways depending on what data you want to load from them.

## LOADING VARIOUS DATA FROM THE ASSETS

To load data from a text-based asset, it needs to be part of an [AssetBundle](#), so that you can access the data using the following methods:

- [AssetBundle.loadString](#), which is used to load strings from text assets.
- [AssetBundle.load](#), which is used to load bytes from a file.
- [AssetBundle.loadStructuredData](#), which is used to load any Dart type of data from a file.

All of these return [Futures](#), so you'll need to use the facilities described in *[Asynchronous Code in Dart: The dart:async Library](#)* to get the value of the string.

### Where You Can Get an AssetBundle

The basic [AssetBundle](#) all Flutter apps get is the [rootBundle](#), which contains all of the assets we added to [pubspec.yaml](#).

This means you can load a text file off the [rootBundle](#) directly in the following way:

```
rootBundle.loadString("path/to/file.txt")
```

Alternatively, you can use the [DefaultAssetBundle](#), which is actually inherited from the parent [MaterialApp](#) and can be changed at runtime because it isn't a [final](#) variable like the

`rootBundle`. The `DefaultAssetBundle` is accessed using the:

```
DefaultAssetBundle.of(context)
```

we used for the `Theme` in the previous chapter. This syntax will be clarified when we discover the full power of the `InheritedWidget` in *InheritedWidgets*.

We can load data from it by using the usual:

```
DefaultAssetBundle.of(context).loadString("path/to/file.txt")
```

syntax, but the characterizing feature of this kind of `AssetBundle` is that it doesn't necessarily have to be the `rootBundle` (by default the `DefaultAssetBundle` is just the `rootBundle`): you can create your own class that extends the `CachingAssetBundle` interface, for example, and cache some strings you think you might want to fetch multiple times during your app's execution or replace it with a `NetworkAssetBundle` that loads the assets over the network.

You can't take advantage of either of those classes, though, if you don't know how to use an `InheritedWidget` first so I recommend you stick to using either the `rootBundle` directly or the `DefaultAssetBundle` and only worry about replacing the asset bundle later, when perhaps you're sure replacing the asset bundle is the best way to do what you're trying to achieve. If you really need to know how to do that now, *InheritedWidgets* is another reference to the section on `InheritedWidgets`.

## Images

To use an image in the assets you can simply use the `Image.asset` as described in *Displaying Images from the Assets*.

## Displaying Images

Images can have different usages and they can come from different places, so displaying images in Flutter varies depending on where you want to load the images and what you need to use them for.

There are two classes that are used for this purpose. One is the `Image`, which is a widget like a `Text`, an `Icon`, or any other widget you've seen until now. The other is the `ImageProvider`, which is needed when you need to specify an image and externally manipulate its size or shape.

An `Image` widget is a representation of the image and you can add it to an app's layout anywhere, whereas the `ImageProvider` class is a source for an image and it is used to form widgets with that image.

### DISPLAYING IMAGES FROM THE NETWORK

If you have a URL containing an image, in the form `http://example.com/image.png`, you can get its corresponding `Image` widget by using the `Image.network` constructor like this:

```
Image.network("http://example.com/image.png")
```

You can use it anywhere any other widget (like a `Text` or an `Icon`) can be used.

#### Change the Image's Attributes

You can change the following options:

- The `scale`, which is a `double` value, and you use it to set the scale at which the image is displayed.
- The maximum `width` and `height` in pixels.

- `repeat`, which controls whether the image will be repeated within the `width` and `height` and is of type `ImageRepeat`. By default, `ImageRepeat` is set to `ImageRepeat.noRepeat`, which leaves the remaining `width` and `height` as empty or transparent. The other options are `ImageRepeat.repeatX` and `ImageRepeat.repeatY` (which control whether the image can only be repeated along one axis or the other) and `ImageRepeat.repeat` (which enables the image to be repeated in all directions to fit the `width` and `height`).
- The `color` of the background of the widget, which is shown where there is transparency. This is also used around the image if the `width` and `height` are incompatible with the image's and repetition is not allowed.
- `headers` sets the headers for the HTTP request using a `Map<String, String>`.
- A `semanticLabel String` for screen reading accessibility services and an `excludeFromSemantics bool` if it's explicitly not needed.

## Use Width, Height, and Repetition Attributes to Display Images the Way You Want Them

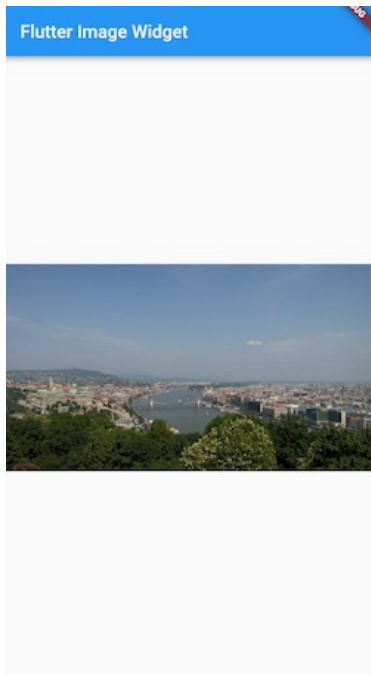
To further clarify how `width`, `height`, and `repeat` are used, we'll look at a few screenshots showing different combinations of size and repetition settings.

If you don't set anything at all, and just give a URL, like this:

```
Image.network(  
  url  
)
```

the image will be fitted to the view, as you can see in the first [screenshot](#).

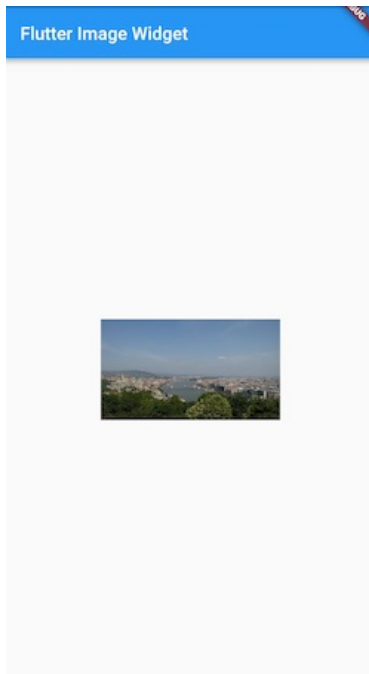




If you set a width lower than the view's width, like this:

```
Image.network(  
  url,  
  width: 200.0  
)
```

the image will scale down to fit within that width (see the second screenshot).



Setting a width higher than the view's width will have no effect: the result will be the same as on the first screenshot. Setting a height higher or lower than the height the image will end up being normally (given that the image is width-restricted in this case) will have the same effect as the that we've seen when setting the width to a value higher or lower than the width of the view.

Things change when we set `repeat` to anything other than the default `ImageRepeat.noRepeat`: allowing for repetition makes it possible to fill a width/height ratio that is different when compared to the aspect ratio of the image that we want to display.

If we set both a width and an height the image will be repeated on the side ending up longer than the original image's aspect ratio—for example, if you set the height to an high value and the width to a low value and you set repetition to either `ImageRepeat.repeat` or `ImageRepeat.repeatY`, this code:

```
Image.network(  
  url,  
  width: 100,  
  height: 100,  
  repeat: ImageRepeat.repeatY,  
)
```

```
width: 412.0,  
height: 450.0,  
repeat: ImageRepeat.repeatY // or ImageRepeat.repeat  
)
```

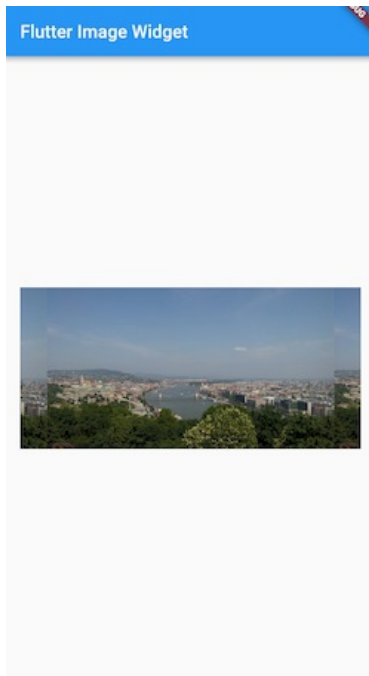
will yield the result as seen in the first screenshot, with the image vertically repeated to fit the higher height.



If, instead, you set the height and width so that the image has more horizontal space than it has content (by constraining the height more), like in this example:

```
Image.network(  
  url,  
  width: 380.0,  
  height: 180.0,  
  repeat: ImageRepeat.repeatX // or ImageRepeat.repeat  
)
```

you will get the result as seen in the second screenshot.



If we had just limited the height the result would be very similar, but the image would fill the entire horizontal space available by showing a bigger portion of the image in the repeated portions.

### ImageProvider for Images from the Network

When we want to use the image from the network for an [ImageProvider](#) like, for example, we will when we discuss how to make round widgets in *Make Round Widgets*, we need to use the [NetworkImage](#) class. The [NetworkImage](#) is created by passing to its constructor the URL of the image:

```
var imageProv = NetworkImage("http://example.com/image.png")
```

The [NetworkImage](#) constructor also allows for setting the [scale](#) of the image and the image GET request's HTTP [headers](#).

## DISPLAYING IMAGES FROM THE ASSETS

We learned how to add assets to your Flutter app in *Add Your Own Assets to the App*, but now you'll see the classes that are used to take the images you add there and display them.

Given the name of the asset you display that image asset in the following way:

```
Image.asset(  
  "imagename.png",  
)
```

### ImageProvider for Asset Images

You can use images as [ImageProviders](#) using the [AssetImage](#) class:

```
AssetImage(  
  "imagename.png",  
)
```

## DISPLAYING IMAGES FROM MEMORY

This is used when images are stored in memory as bytes using [Image.toByteData\(\)](#), which stores them as a [Uint8List](#) (we'll discuss this further in *[Lists of Bytes and More: the dart:typed\\_data library](#)*). For example, to store an image called [image](#) in a variable called [bytes](#), you would use the following:

```
var bytes = image.toByteData();
```

After you have done that, you might write that to a file or just leave it in memory.

If you wanted to display those bytes as an image again, you would write the following:

```
Image.memory(  
  bytes  
)
```

### ImageProvider for Memory Images

You can use an image stored in memory as an [ImageProvider](#) using the [MemoryImage](#) class, which is used in the following way, as you might have predicted by now:

```
MemoryImage(  
  bytes  
,
```

)

## USING AN IMAGEPROVIDER INSIDE AN IMAGE WIDGET

As an example, we'll use the [ImageProvider](#) to create an [Image](#) widget by passing the [ImageProvider](#) as the named `image` argument. This adds unnecessary complexity in this case, but it is important to understand how to create [ImageProviders](#) to be able to understand other examples throughout the book:

```
Image(  
  image: NetworkImage(  
    "http://example.com/image.png"  
  ),  
)
```

along with any scale, width, height, repetition, or other modifications to the image.

The same is also true for [AssetImages](#) and [MemoryImages](#), and might help to explain the difference in the data contained in an [ImageProvider](#) when compared to an [Image](#) widget.

# Vertical Layout

There are two options available when the developer needs to lay out items vertically, depending on what is needed: the [Column](#) and the [ListView](#).

## THE COLUMN

The [Column](#) is used to create a vertical stack of widgets, and it is not scrollable. It is used to display items next to each other vertically and not to create a list of items.

### How You Use It

You can make a simple [Column](#) this way:

```
Column(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    // Widgets separated by commas  
  ],  
)
```

### Layout Widget Options

You just need to put the widgets inside the square brackets of the [Widget](#) collection literal (more on collection literals and lists in [Lists and collection literals](#)) and the widgets will be shown in a vertical stack, but there are a lot of options to customize in the constructor's arguments, like the [mainAxisAlignment](#), which sets how the children widgets should be aligned along the main axis (in the case of a [Column](#) it is the vertical axis), and can be one of:

- [MainAxisAlignment.start](#), [MainAxisAlignment.center](#), or [MainAxisAlignment.end](#), which will place the widgets as close as possible, respectively, to the start, middle, or end of the main axis.
- [MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround](#), which uses half of the available space to separate the children from each other and the other half of it to separate the first and last of them from the start and end of the Column.

- [MainAxisAlignment.spaceBetween](#), which uses the space to make the children as far as possible to each other.
- [MainAxisAlignment.spaceEvenly](#), which separates each child from the next as much as the start of the [Column](#) to the first and the last to the end of the `Column`.

Closely related is the [mainAxisSize](#), which can be either [MainAxisSize.max](#) OR [MainAxisSize.min](#).

There is also [crossAxisAlignment](#), which sets how the children widgets should be aligned along the cross axis (in the case of a [Column](#) it is the horizontal axis) and can be one of the following:

- The default [CrossAxisAlignment.center](#), which aligns the widgets so that their center is aligned.
- [CrossAxisAlignment.start](#) and [CrossAxisAlignment.end](#) which, respectively, align the widgets to the start or the end of the cross axis.
- [CrossAxisAlignment.stretch](#), which makes the widgets occupy as much space as possible in the cross axis.
- [CrossAxisAlignment.baseline](#), especially useful with [Row](#)'s, which aligns the children's baseline.

### What You Use It For

You can use a [Column](#) simply, like in the previous chapter, to show two widgets one on top of the other, like this:

```
Scaffold(
  appBar: AppBar(...),
  body: Column(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.start,
    mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceBetween,
    children: <Widget> [
      Icon(Icons.arrow_upward),
      Text("This will be in the middle"),
      Text("This will be at the bottom")
    ],
  ),
)
```





but you will probably want to use it more often to group together widgets, perhaps forming a new and more complex widget:

```
class TwoTexts extends StatelessWidget {  
  
  TwoTexts({this.firstText, this.secondText});  
  
  String firstText, secondText;  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Column(  
      children: <Widget> [  
        Text(firstText),  
        Text(secondText)  
      ],  
    );  
  }  
}
```

This will be especially useful inside [ListView](#)s, which we'll see in action now.

## THE LISTVIEW

The `ListView` is used to create a scrollable list of widgets.

It is used when there is a need to create long lists of similar (or the same) items, and it can dynamically load other elements when they are many (or unlimited).

The list can be expressed in multiple ways, as we will now see.

### How You Use It

There are multiple constructors that you can use to create a `ListView`.

The default constructor works just like the `Column`'s constructor: you just need to provide a `List` of `Widgets` as the `children`:

```
ListView(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Text("1"),  
    Text("2"),  
    Text("3"),  
    ...  
  ],  
)
```

This example shows the advantage of using another constructor, the `ListView.builder` constructor, which is used the following way:

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemCount: 499,  
  itemBuilder: (BuildContext context, int i) =>  
    Text("${i+1}"),  
)
```

This does the same and creates a list of 499 `Text` widgets with the numbers from 1 to 500.

But this constructor can also be useful when each element has

something different—for example, if each `Text` needs a different, unrelated string.

After defining something like:

```
const strings = [  
  "The First Widget",  
  "The Second Widget",  
  "The Third Widget",  
  "The Last Widget"  
]
```

or generating a `List` list using what is described in [\*Generating Lists\*](#).

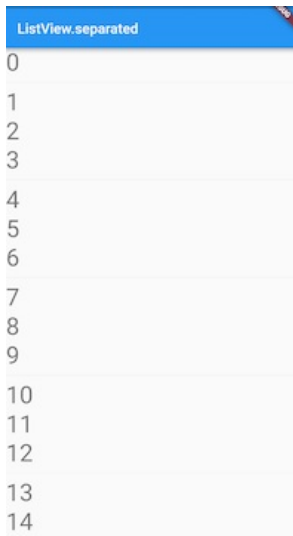
You can create a `ListView` like this:

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemCount: strings.length,  
  itemBuilder: (BuildContext context, int i) =>  
    Text(strings[i]),  
)
```

There is also `ListView.separated`, which allows you to add a separator widget, in this case yet another `Text` for simplicity:

```
ListView.separated(  
  itemCount: 500,  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) =>  
    Text("$i", style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,),  
  separatorBuilder: (context, i) =>  
    i%3 == 0 ? Divider() : Padding(padding: EdgeInsets.all(0.5)),  
)
```

This adds a divider widget<sup>[21]</sup> once every three numbers, starting from the space between the first and second widget, like in the following screenshot:



This is especially useful when you want to display lists of items separated into categories.

Other uses for [ListView](#) in general are explained in the [Row](#)'s usage section in *Where You'll Use the Row Together with Other Widgets*.

[shrinkWrap](#), when set to [false](#) (default), will make the list take up as much space as is available on the main axis. If, instead, you set it to [true](#) the grid's size will adapt to the size that is needed to display its [children](#).

### Customizing the Divider

The [Divider](#) can be customized to fit your app's overall look, feel and needs:

- You can set the [color](#) option to another color.
- You can set its [height](#) option by providing a [double](#) number to make the space bigger or smaller.
- You can set its [indent](#) option by providing a [double](#) number to make the line start at a different position along the horizontal axis.

### Horizontal Lists

You can use [scrollDirection](#) to make a horizontally scrolling list,

which is very useful if you want to have a horizontal list inside a vertical list. This can be seen in several apps and you'll see exactly why it is useful.

In the following example, I'll explain how to show many products, grouped in categories, using a combination of `ListView.builder` to display the categories and horizontal `ListView.builder` to show the products. We'll use example data, defined in the following way:

```
const categories = [
  "Automotive",
  "Books",
  "Electronics",
  "Food"
];

const products = [
  [
    "Car", "Tyre", "Fuel", "Oil"
  ],
  [
    "Programming Book", "Novel", "Politics Book", "Business Book"
  ],
  [
    "Desktop Computer", "Laptop", "Computer keyboard"
  ],
  [
    "Pasta", "Pizza", "Bread", "Cheese", "Ham", "Sausage", "Beef"
  ]
];
```

and then render the product list using something like:

```
return Scaffold(
  backgroundColor: Colors.greenAccent,
  appBar: AppBar(title: Text("List inside List example")),
  body: ListView.builder(
    itemCount: categories.length,
    itemBuilder: (context, i) =>
      Column(
        children: <Widget> [
          Text(categories[i]),
          Container(
            height: 150.0,
            child: ListView.builder(
              itemCount: products[i].length,
```

```

child: ListView.builder(
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
  scrollDirection: Axis.horizontal,
  itemCount: products[i].length,
  itemBuilder: (context, j) =>
    Padding(
      padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),
      child: Card(
        child: Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
          child: Text(
            products[i][j],
            style: Theme.of(context)
              .textTheme.display1,
          ),
        ),
      ),
    ),
  ),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
);

```

which produces the result as seen in the [screenshot](#).



The [Container](#) is needed to constrain the internal [ListView](#) since it is inside another scrollable widget and the app wouldn't work

without it.

More on the [Card](#) in *The Card*.

### The ListTile

The [ListTile](#) is the typical widget that is used with [ListView](#)s and is very common in chat apps: the typical row made of a (usually round) preview picture, on the left, and on the right side a title and an optional subtitle.

### Implement a ListTile

[ListTile](#) is very common and useful and very easy to implement in Flutter:

```
ListTile(  
  leading: Image(leftImage), // OPTIONAL  
  title: Text(title),  
  subtitle: Text(subtitle), // OPTIONAL  
  onTap: () => openTile(), // OPTIONAL  
)
```

[leading](#) is the little preview widget shown *before* the title, and it is usually an image, [title](#) is the big text description of the element, the [subtitle](#) is smaller and shown below, and [onTap](#) is the function that will be fired when the user taps on the tile.

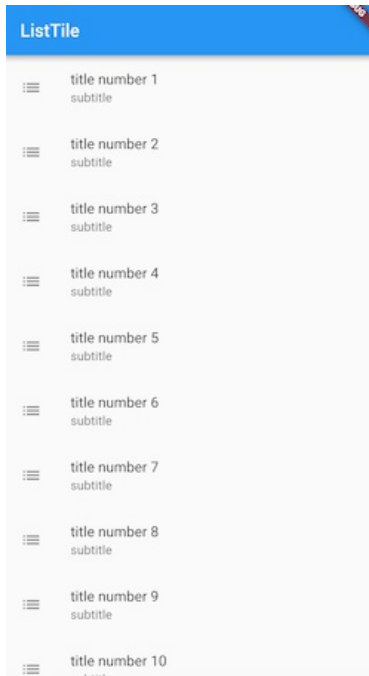
There is also a (less common) [trailing](#) argument available to add a widget placed *after* the title.

For example, the following code, using the list icon as the leading icon:

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) =>  
    ListTile(  
      leading: Icon(Icons.list),  
      title: Text("title number  $\{i+1\}$ "),  
      subtitle: Text("subtitle"),  
    ),  
)
```

```
),  
)
```

will produce:



### Make Round Widgets

You previously learned that the [leading](#) widget of a [ListTile](#) is usually round, but how can you make a round widget?

You build round widgets in two ways: using a [CircleAvatar](#) or using a [BoxDecoration](#) for a [Container](#).

### Use a Container to Make Widgets of Any Shape and Size

The most versatile and generic way is to contain the widget within a circular shape using a circle-shaped [Container](#).

As an example of the usage of the container, the following code produces a normal square box with an icon and some text:

```
Container(  
  height: 50.0,
```

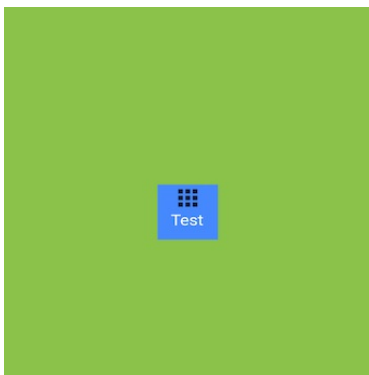


```

width: 50.0,
color: Colors.blueAccent,
child: Column(
  children: <Widget> [
    Icon(Icons.apps),
    Text(
      "Test",
      style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
    ),
  ],
),
)

```

just like in the following screenshot:



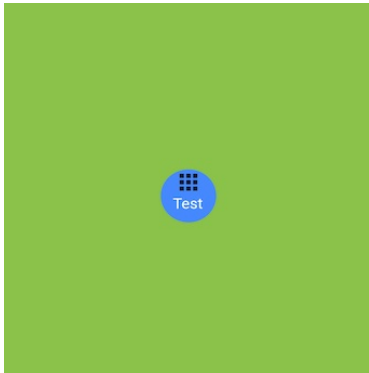
A [Container](#) can be made of any shape or size. Making it round is very simple, but you have to keep in mind that you need to move the [color](#) attribute to the [BoxDecoration](#) widget:

```

Container(
  height: 50.0,
  width: 50.0,
  child: Column(
    children: <Widget> [
      Icon(Icons.apps),
      Text(
        "Test",
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
    ],
  ),
  decoration: BoxDecoration(
    color: Colors.blueAccent,
    shape: BoxShape.circle,
  ),
)

```

and that produces:



## Use a `CircleAvatar` to Round Widgets

The alternative is to use a `CircleAvatar`, which simplifies the process when it can be used.

A `CircleAvatar` is comparable to a pre-made circle container and it is optimized for rounding images, but it can also be used as a container.

For example, you could exactly replicate the `Container` example from before in a simpler way like this:

```
CircleAvatar(  
  radius: 25.0,  
  backgroundColor: Colors.blue,  
  child: Center(  
    child: Column(  
      children: <Widget>[  
        Icon(Icons.apps),  
        Text("Test", style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),)  
      ],  
    ),  
  ),  
),
```

Where the `radius` is the radius of the circle, the `backgroundColor` is the background color of the circle and the `child` is what will actually be displayed inside the circle.

The real advantage of using a [CircleAvatar](#) is that it allows you to cut an image into a round shape in a really easy way by simply passing an [ImageProvider](#) as the `backgroundImage` argument.

Using the [pragprog.com](#) website's PNG favicon<sup>[22]</sup> as an example, you would display it inside an app by using the [Image.network](#) constructor of the [Image](#) widget and passing the URL as the positional argument (as we'll do in the Chapter 5, *Network and Storage I/O and Navigation*), like this:

```
Image.network("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png")
```

but that can't be used for the [CircleAvatar](#)'s `backgroundImage` because it needs an [ImageProvider](#), not an [Image](#).

So you need to use the [NetworkImage](#) class, and pass that as the argument of the [CircleAvatar](#), like in the following example:

```
CircleAvatar(  
  backgroundImage: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),  
)
```

which produces the following round image:



Obviously you can change the radius to your liking by using the `radius` argument.

## Use a [CircleAvatar](#) in a [ListTile](#)

Integrating it into a [ListTile](#) is as simple as using the [CircleAvatar](#) as the [leading](#) widget, like in the following example:

```
ListTile(  
  leading: CircleAvatar(  
    backgroundImage: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),  
  ),  
  title: Text("Example"),  
),
```

which produces:



### Use the Expandable ListTile: The ExpansionTile

The [ExpansionTile](#) is an expandable [ListTile](#): it is just like a [ListTile](#) when it first gets rendered but you can, without leaving the current view, make an [ExpansionTile](#) taller and show more widgets, like more text or additional buttons and features.

You use the [ExpansionTile](#) like this:

```
ExpansionTile(  
  leading: Image(leftImage), // OPTIONAL  
  title: Text(title),  
  
  // ExpansionTile-specific arguments  
  initiallyExpanded: true, // OPTIONAL default: false  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Row(  
      children: [  
        Text("Left on first row"),  
        Text("Right on first row"),  
      ],  
    ),  
    Text("Second row"),  
  ],  
  backgroundColor: Colors.green[100], // OPTIONAL  
  // OPTIONAL, argument is a boolean, true if expanding, false if collapsing  
  onExpansionChanged: (expanding) {return;}  
)
```

## Change the `ExpansionTile`'s attributes

Most of the properties are the same as the `ListTile`'s (except for `onTap`, which doesn't exist for `ExpansionTiles`), but `trailing` is different this time: if it is not specified it will be an arrow which, when clicked, rotates to show whether the widget is expanded or not.

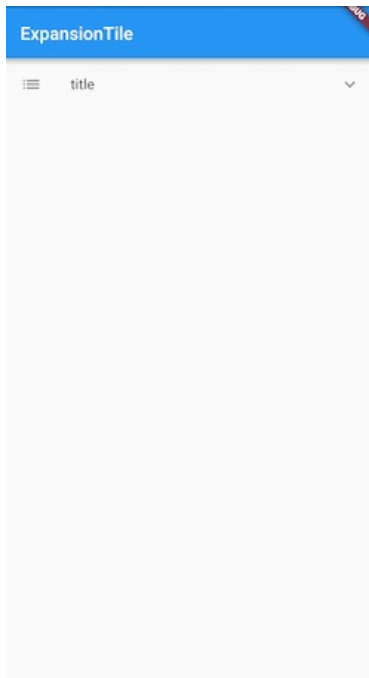
There are four main `ExpansionTile`-specific arguments:

- `initiallyExpanded`, which can be set to `true` if you want the initial state of the widget to be the expanded state.
- `children`, which is the list of widgets to be displayed below the tile when it expands.
- `backgroundColor`, which is the background color of the list of children widgets.
- `onExpansionChanged`, with which you can set a function to be called when the tile is expanded.

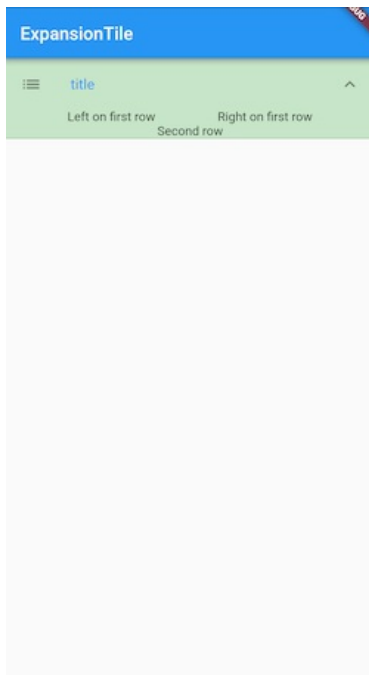
For example, the following code:

```
ExpansionTile(  
  leading: Icon(Icons.list),  
  title: Text("title"),  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Row(  
      mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceEvenly,  
      children: [  
        Text("Left on first row"),  
        Text("Right on first row"),  
      ],  
    ),  
    Text("Second row"),  
  ],  
)
```

produces:



which can be expanded to:



### Dismissible ListTiles

A very common usage for [ListTiles](#) is as dismissible widgets, which means they can be deleted with a swipe gesture. A widget gains that ability by being wrapped in a [Dismissible](#) widget.

`Dismissible` requires a `Key` to be provided. It's not strictly necessary to understand `Keys` to use `Dismissibles`, but a more in-depth explanation will be provided in *[The Key](#)*.

The `Dismissible` widget is used in the following way:

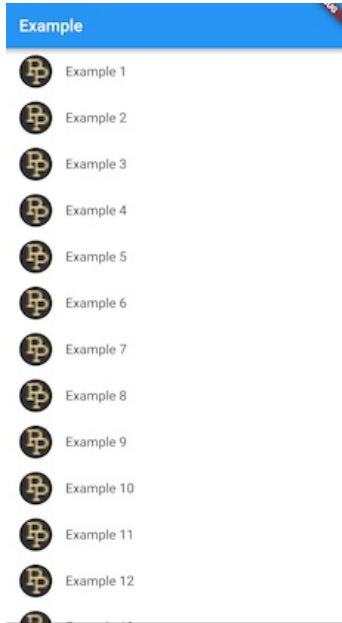
```
Dismissible(  
  background: Container(color: Colors.green),  
  key: Key(string),  
  child: ListTile(  
    title: Text(string),  
  ),  
)
```

where the `background` is what is shown behind the tile when it is swiped by the user. Setting it to a container makes it possible to choose the background color.

A complete implementation of `Dismissible` inside a `ListView` would be:

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemCount: 20,  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) => Dismissible(  
    background: Container(  
      color: Colors.red,  
      child: Row(  
        mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceBetween,  
        children: [  
          Icon(Icons.clear, color: Colors.white,),  
          Icon(Icons.clear, color: Colors.white,),  
        ],  
      ),  
    ),  
    key: UniqueKey(),  
    child: ListTile(  
      leading: CircleAvatar(  
        backgroundImage: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),  
      ),  
      title: Text("Example ${i+1}"),  
    ),  
  ),  
)
```

The [UniqueKey](#) is the most basic and uncomplicated [Key](#), and it should be enough unless you need greater control over the widgets' state than is provided by Flutter by default. The [Row](#) with two spaced-out [Icons.clear](#) icons shows the [Icon](#) on both sides when the tile is swiped. That code generates the following list:

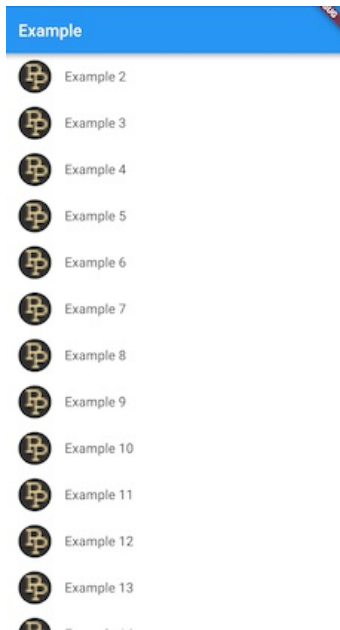


Partially swiping a tile shows the red background and an icon:



And completely swiping it removes the tile from the list with a nice animation, eventually leaving the list looking like this:





### Displaying a SnackBar

In most apps, when a [ListTile](#) is dismissed, a [SnackBar](#)<sup>[23]</sup> is displayed at the bottom of the screen.

Displaying a [SnackBar](#) using Flutter is really simple:

```
Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(  
  SnackBar(  
    content: Text(  
      "Tile #${i+1} was dismissed"  
    ),  
  ),  
),
```

And it can be displayed automatically when a tile is dismissed by changing the code to:

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemCount: 20,  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) => Dismissible(  
    background: Container(  
      color: Colors.red,  
      child: Row(  
        mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceBetween,  
        children: [  
          Icon(Icons.clear, color: Colors.white,),  
          Icon(Icons.clear, color: Colors.white,),  
        ],  
      ),  
    ),  
  ),  
),
```

```

    ),
  ),
  key: UniqueKey(),
  child: ListTile(
    leading: CircleAvatar(
      backgroundImage: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),
    ),
    title: Text("Example ${i+1}"),
  ),
  onDismissed: (direction) {
    Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
      SnackBar(
        content: Text(
          "Tile #${i+1} was dismissed"
        ),
      ),
    ),
  },
),
),
),

```

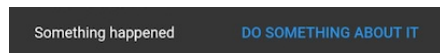
The `SnackBar`'s constructor supports, in addition to the `content`, an `action` attribute, in the form of a `SnackBarAction`, which allows the developer to display a button that allows the user to take an action in response to the `SnackBar`'s message:

```

SnackBar(
  content: Text("Something happened"),
  action: SnackBarAction(
    label: "DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT",
    onPressed: () {
      // do something about it
    },
  ),
),

```

A `SnackBar` built with that code looks like this:



## Horizontal Layout: The Row

The [Row](#) lays out widgets side by side, and is very similar to a [Column](#), with the difference being that the main axis and cross axis are the other way around.

### HOW YOU USE IT AND WHAT YOU USE IT FOR

You can use a [Row](#) simply the following way:

```
Column(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Text("This will be the left side"),  
    Text("This will be the right side")  
  ],  
)
```

The options are the same as the [Column](#)'s (with the cross axis becoming the vertical and the main axis becoming the horizontal) and you can find them in [Layout Widget Options](#).

### Where You'll Use the Row Together with Other Widgets

[Rows](#) and [Columns](#) make for great bonding widgets: with them you can make your complex widgets made of simple elements.

For example, a simple social network post can be expressed with a [Column](#) with three elements: a [Row](#) showing the profile picture and the profile name, a big text in the middle, and at the bottom, a row showing the commands:

```
Column(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Row(  
      children: <Widget> [  
        ProfilePicture(profileID),  
        Text(profileName),  
      ],  
    ),  
    Text(postText),  
  ],  
)
```

```

Row(
  children: <Widget> [
    LikeButton(),
    CommentButton(),
    ShareButton()
  ],
),
],
)

```

This combination of widgets, but also just a [Row](#) of widgets, is easily inserted inside a [ListView](#) or [GridView](#) which, to keep with the running example of a social network, could be a social network feed.

This isn't hard to do—we'll start by making the respect the spaces and sizes needed for the different elements that compose it:

```

Column(
  children: <Widget> [
    Row(
      children: <Widget> [
        CircleAvatar(
          backgroundImage: ProfilePicture(profileID),
        ),

        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(20),
          child: Text(profileName),
        ),
      ],
    ),
    Align(
      alignment: FractionalOffset.centerLeft,
      child: Padding(
        padding: EdgeInsets.all(5),
        child: Text(postText),
      ),
    ),
    Divider(),
    Row(
      children: <Widget> [
        LikeButton(),
        CommentButton(),
        ShareButton()
      ],
    ),
  ],
)

```

```

    ),
  ],
),

```

And all that's left to do to make this work is to replace the placeholder widgets with real widgets.

For the profile picture we'll use the same

`NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png")` we used previously, whereas the like, comment, and share buttons will be simple `IconButton`s:

```

Column(
  children: <Widget> [
    Row(
      children: <Widget> [
        CircleAvatar(
          backgroundImage: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),
        ),

        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(20),
          child: Text("Short poster"),
        ),
      ],
    ),
    Align(
      alignment: FractionalOffset.centerLeft,
      child: Padding(
        padding: EdgeInsets.all(5),
        child: Text("This is a short post, but that doesn't really matter"),
      ),
    ),
    Divider(),
    Row(
      children: <Widget> [
        IconButton(
          icon: Icon(Icons.thumb_up, color: Colors.redAccent),
          onPressed: () {},
        ),
        IconButton(
          icon: Icon(Icons.comment, color: Colors.greenAccent),
          onPressed: () {},
        ),
        IconButton(
          icon: Icon(Icons.share, color: Colors.blueAccent),

```

```

        onPressed: () {},
      ),
    ],
  ),
],
),

```

To create a complete view with a [ListView](#) of posts we should also store the post data separately in a [List](#), since in a real app you're never going to hard-code such data.

To do that, we'll start by creating a class to contain the post data:

```

class Post {

  Post({this.profileName, this.profilePicture, this.postText});

  ImageProvider profilePicture;
  String profileName;
  String postText;
}

```

and a [List](#) of that class with some data:

```

List<Post> posts = [
  Post(
    postText: "This is a short post, but that doesn't really matter",
    profileName: "Short poster",
    profilePicture: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),
  ),
  Post(
    postText: "This is a longer post, which really shows how the" +
      "widgets will naturally expand when there is more content to display.\n" +
      "At this, point, this line of text is just here because we need to" +
      "make this post so much bigger than the other one.",
    profileName: "Long poster",
    profilePicture: NetworkImage("https://pragprog.com/favicon.png"),
  ),
];

```

At this point, the resulting [ListView](#) is quite straightforward:

```

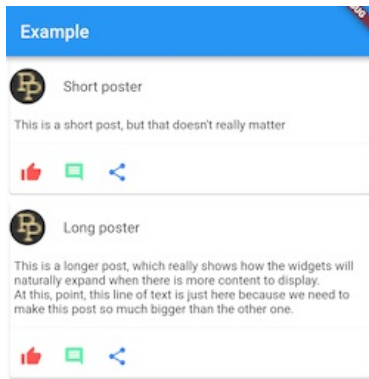
ListView.builder(
  itemCount: 2,

```

```
itemBuilder: (context, i) => Card(
  child: Column(
    children: <Widget> [
      Row(
        children: <Widget> [
          CircleAvatar(
            backgroundImage: posts[i].profilePicture,
          ),

          Padding(
            padding: EdgeInsets.all(20),
            child: Text(posts[i].profileName,
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subhead),
          ),
        ],
      ),
      Align(
        alignment: FractionalOffset.centerLeft,
        child: Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(5),
          child: Text(posts[i].postText,
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.body1),
        )
      ),
      Divider(),
      Row(
        children: <Widget> [
          IconButton(
            icon: Icon(Icons.thumb_up, color: Colors.redAccent),
            onPressed: () {},
          ),
          IconButton(
            icon: Icon(Icons.comment, color: Colors.greenAccent),
            onPressed: () {},
          ),
          IconButton(
            icon: Icon(Icons.share, color: Colors.blueAccent),
            onPressed: () {},
          ),
        ],
      ),
    ],
  ),
),
```

producing the following result:



Nested [Rows](#) and [Columns](#) can also be used to create grids, as described in *Nested Rows and Columns*.



# Making Grids

Depending on what you need to achieve with your app, a grid can be formed in two different ways: using the [GridView](#) or nested [Rows](#) and [Columns](#).

## THE GRIDVIEW

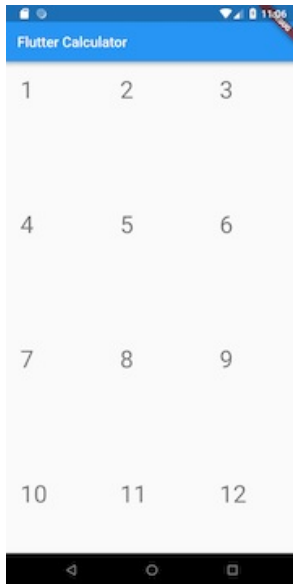
The [GridView](#) is to grids what the [ListView](#) is to vertical layout, and it is useful for grids similar to the ones seen in photo apps: long, scrollable grids of a variable number of fixed-size elements. A lot like a [ListView](#), it can be created using multiple constructors. The default constructor will be discussed in the section *[Slivers, Custom Scrollables, and Collapsible App Bars](#)*.

### Grids with a Fixed Cross-Axis Count

The [GridView.count](#) constructor takes a [List](#) of [children Widgets](#) and the [crossAxisCount](#) as the basic arguments to build the grid, like in the following example:

```
GridView.count(  
  crossAxisCount: 3,  
  crossAxisSpacing: 50.0,  
  mainAxisSpacing: 100.0,  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  children: [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15]  
    .map(  
      (n) =>  
        Text(  
          "$n",  
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,  
        ),  
    ).toList(),  
)
```

which produces:



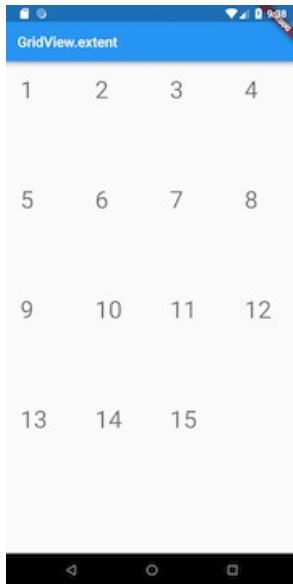
### Grids with a Maximum Per-Widget Cross-Axis Extent

The `GridView.extent` constructor takes a `List` of `children Widgets` and the `maxCrossAxisExtent`, which is the maximum amount of pixels each child can take up on the cross-axis. The bigger the `maxCrossAxisExtent` is, the bigger each tile is going to be.

For example, the following:

```
GridView.extent(  
  maxCrossAxisExtent: 50.0,  
  crossAxisSpacing: 50.0,  
  mainAxisSpacing: 100.0,  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  children: [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15]  
    .map(  
      (n) =>  
        Text(  
          "$n",  
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,  
        ),  
    ).toList(),  
)
```

produces, on a 2880x1440 560dpi screen with default Android scaling, the following grid:



### Grids Built Using Builder Functions

The `GridView.builder` constructor which uses an `itemBuilder` to build the children and a `gridDelegate` for the size and position of the widgets, like the following example, which produces the same grid as the `GridView.count` example ([here](#)):

```
GridView.builder(  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  
  itemCount: 15,  
  
  gridDelegate: SliverGridDelegateWithFixedCrossAxisCount(  
    crossAxisCount: 3,  
    crossAxisSpacing: 50.0,  
    mainAxisSpacing: 100.0,  
  ),  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) => Text("${i+1}"),  
)
```

Grid delegates have (unusually long) names such as `SliverGridDelegateWithFixedCrossAxisCount` and `SliverGridDelegateWithMaxCrossAxisExtent` to get, respectively, the `GridView.count` and `GridView.extent` properties. They take grid layout-related properties as named arguments.

If you wanted to exactly replicate the behavior of the

[GridView.extent](#) shown here you would write the following:

```
GridView.builder(  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  
  itemCount: 15,  
  
  gridDelegate: SliverGridDelegateWithMaxCrossAxisExtent(  
    maxCrossAxisExtent: 50.0,  
    crossAxisSpacing: 50.0,  
    mainAxisSpacing: 100.0,  
  ),  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) => Text("${i+1}"),  
  
)
```

### The GridView's Properties

Other grid properties are:

- [childAspectRatio](#), which is the ratio between cross-axis and main axis size of each of the grid's [children](#).
- [shrinkWrap](#), which is the same as the [ListView](#)'s (in [How You Use It](#)).
- [scrollDirection](#), which sets the direction along which the grid scrolls (which also serves as the main axis of the grid).

## NESTED ROWS AND COLUMNS

If, instead, you need to create a (perhaps smaller) non-scrollable grid of a fixed number of widgets you would use a [Column](#) of [Rows](#).

A simple 2x2 grid would be implemented in the following way:

```
Column(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Row(  
      children: <Widget> [  
        Text(topLeftString),  
        Text(topRightString),  
      ],  
    ),  
    Row(  

```

```
children: <Widget> [  
  Text(bottomLeftString),  
  Text(bottomRightString),  
],  
)  
],  
)
```

## The Card

The [Card](#) is a Material Design component<sup>[24]</sup> used to visually group together (or separate) widgets.

You can use it as part of the overall layout of an app or inside lists or grids.

For example, this code:

```
GridView.builder(  
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(20.0),  
  
  itemCount: 15,  
  
  gridDelegate: SliverGridDelegateWithFixedCrossAxisCount(  
    crossAxisCount: 3,  
    crossAxisSpacing: 50.0,  
    mainAxisSpacing: 100.0,  
  ),  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) => Card(  
    child: Center(  
      child: Text("${i+1}"),  
    ),  
  ),  
),
```

nicely shows the space available for each [GridView](#) tile on those settings:



But a [Card](#) is used really often inside [ListView](#)s.

An example of the usage as a generic layout element will be given when we talk about making a calculator app in Chapter 3, *[Building a Calculator App](#)*.

## USING BUTTONS SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR CARDS

[ButtonTheme.bar](#) is meant specifically for use inside [Cards](#) and [ExpansionTile](#)s.

It simply groups together buttons in a [Row](#) and gives them an adequate theme, like in the following example (we're generating pseudo-pseudo-random numbers around 3200 because it's not worth it to generate *real* pseudo-random numbers and would have yielded a less realistic result):

```
ListView.builder(  
  itemBuilder: (context, i) {  
    var n = 3231-i-i*23*(i%2)-1;  
    Card(  
      margin: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
```

```

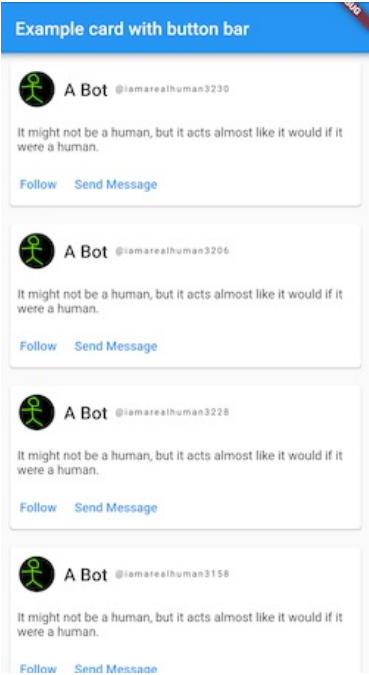
child: Column(
  children: <Widget>[
    Row(
      children: <Widget>[
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
          child: CircleAvatar(
            backgroundImage: NetworkImage(
              "http://www.carminerezacc.com/manstick.png",
            ),
          ),
        ),
        Text(
          "A Bot",
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
        ),
        Text(
          " @iamarealhuman$n",
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.overline,
        ),
      ],
    ),
    Padding(
      child: Text(
        "It might not be a human," +
        "but it acts almost like it would if it were a human.",
        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.body1,
      ),
      padding: EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: 10.0, horizontal: 8.0),
    ),
    ButtonTheme.bar(
      // OPTIONAL:buttonColor: Colors.X,
      // OPTIONAL:colorScheme:
      //   ColorScheme.fromSwatch(primarySwatch: Colors.X)
      child: Row(
        children: <Widget>[
          FlatButton(
            child: Text("Follow"),
            onPressed: () => Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
              SnackBar(
                content: Text(
                  "Now you follow @iamarealhuman$n"
                ),
              ),
            ),
          ),
          FlatButton(
            child: Text("Send Message"),
            onPressed: () => Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
              SnackBar(

```



```
SnackBar(  
  content: Text(  
    "You can't send messages to @iamarealhuman$n"  
  ),  
),  
),  
),  
),  
],  
),  
),  
],  
),  
);  
}  
),
```

which produces the following list:



## ANOTHER MATERIAL DESIGN ELEMENT: THE CHIP

Since we're talking about Material Design components, another one that is integrated into Flutter and has similar uses to the [Card](#) is the [Chip](#).<sup>[25]</sup>

They are used really often to display contact names inside some SMS or email apps, but also for filtering, making

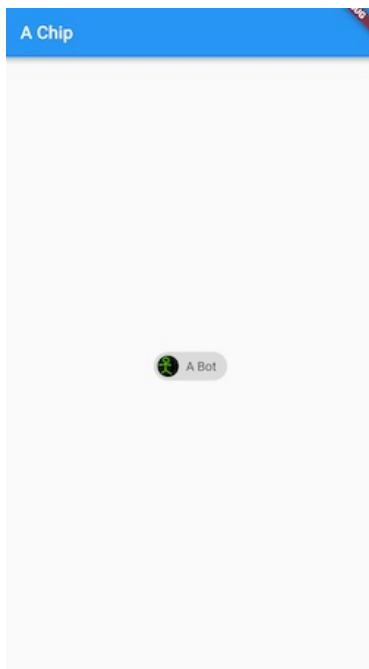
choices, and performing actions.

They are very small and are usually made of a round image or icon (called an [avatar](#)) and some text (called a [label](#)). It can optionally have a [deleteIcon](#) that calls the [VoidCallback](#) set as the [onDelete](#) option.

A [Chip](#) with a simple round [CircleAvatar](#) and a label can be built using the following code:

```
Chip(  
  avatar: CircleAvatar(  
    backgroundImage:  
      NetworkImage("http://www.carminenzacc.com/manstick.png"),  
  ),  
  label: Text("A Bot"),  
),
```

and, when centered using [Center](#), produces the following:



## Fill the Space Available in the View Using Expanded

When using [Rows](#) and [Columns](#) you only use as much space as you need to and two of the same widget will always take up the same amount of space.

If you want to use all of the space in the view and split the space among the widgets in specific ways you need to use the [Expanded](#) widget.

### HOW YOU USE IT

An [Expanded](#) widget can only be used inside a [Row](#) or [Column](#), and it takes a [child](#) argument for the widget to expand and an optional integer as the [flex](#) argument.

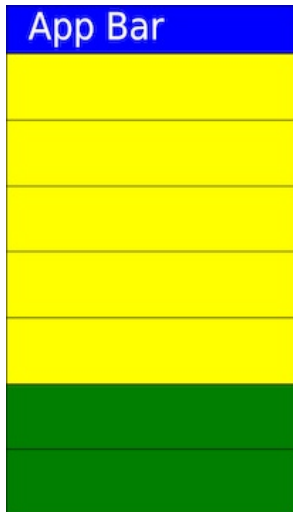
The [child](#) will be expanded to fill as much space as possible, and if there is more than one [Expanded](#) on the same [Row](#) or [Column](#) the space they will take up is directly proportional to their [flex](#) value.

For example, the following code:

```
Column(  
  children: <Widget> [  
    Expanded(  
      flex: 5,  
      child: (  
        ...  
      ),  
    ),  
    Expanded(  
      flex: 2,  
      child: (  
        ...  
      ),  
    ),  
  ],  
)
```

```
    },  
    ],  
    )
```

Will space the widgets out like this:



Excluding the app bar, every green or yellow rectangle represents  $\frac{1}{7}$  of the view, the yellow part ( $\frac{5}{7}$  of the view) will be taken up by the first [Expanded](#)'s child, whereas the green part (the remaining  $\frac{2}{7}$ ) will be where the second [Expanded](#)'s child will reside.

We are going to make extensive use of [Expanded](#) in the next chapter when we build a calculator app.

## Slivers, Custom Scrollables, and Collapsible App Bars

We've already covered most of what you need to know about scrollable widgets like [ListView](#)s and [GridView](#)s, but this section is going to be a deeper dive into the sea of [Scrollable](#), [ScrollView](#)s, [SliverList](#)s, and other lower level, more customizable widgets. You'll also learn how to make the app bar collapsible when the user scrolls down.

### HOW FLUTTER DETERMINES HOW FAR TO SCROLL

Flutter actually simulates scrolling using a [Simulation](#) widget, which simulates the movement of a point to which some forces are being applied in one-dimensional space, and the state of the simulation is used to determine scrolling position. These forces are changed depending on the desired scrolling behavior. This is set using the [ScrollPhysics](#) class, which you can use for the [physics](#) option.

#### primary in a ScrollView

[primary](#) is a boolean option that can be set for [ScrollView](#)s. If it is set to [false](#), the view will only scroll if there are enough children to require scrolling.

### MAKE A COLLAPSABLE APP BAR

A common sight in scrollable apps is a collapsible app bar: it is especially visible in web browsers and, in another variant, in some profile pages of chat apps.

Usually it consists in the appbar disappearing when the user scrolls down and reappearing when the user scrolls up, usually even if the user doesn't scroll up to the top of the scrollable

view.

It can be implemented using a [CustomScrollView](#) that contains a [SliverAppBar](#) and a [SliverList](#) (or, alternatively, a [SliverGrid](#)).

A [SliverList](#) is actually just a [ListView](#) that uses a [SliverChildDelegate](#) to generate its children like you would with [ListView.builder](#), but with an important twist: it is meant to be used as part of a [CustomScrollView](#), which is a particular kind of widget that is used to create a custom scrollable widget using slivers like the [SliverList](#) and [SliverAppBar](#).

To build an app with a collapsable app bar you need a normal [MaterialApp](#) with a [Scaffold](#).

The difference is that you won't be adding an [AppBar](#) to the [Scaffold](#) but just using its [body](#) option and assigning it to a [CustomScrollView](#):

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    body: CustomScrollView(
      slivers: <Widget>[
        SliverAppBar(
          title: Text("A collapsable AppBar"),
        ),
        SliverList(
          delegate: SliverChildBuilderDelegate(
            (context, i) => ListTile(title: Text("$i")),
          ),
        ),
      ],
    ),
  );
}
```

This doesn't actually do what we want, though: the app bar only reappears when the user scrolls to the top of the list, but that isn't the desired behavior, so we need to set the

`SliverAppBar`'s `floating` option to `true` so that it reappears when the user scrolls up from anywhere in the list:

```
SliverAppBar(  
  title: Text("A collapsible AppBar"),  
  floating: true,  
),
```

But this isn't even completely the desired behavior: we want the `SliverAppBar` to appear even if we partially scroll up, so we also need to set `snap` to `true` (which only affects anything if `floating` is also set to `true`):

```
SliverAppBar(  
  title: Text("A collapsible AppBar"),  
  floating: true,  
  snap: true,  
),
```

## The Key

The Key is used to uniquely identify a widget and it is used by the framework to update the elements that actually need to be updated.

You usually won't be using keys, since the framework will take care of them by itself, but you can use them to have greater control of widget state and updates.

In addition to that, there are widgets that explicitly ask for a key, like the [Dismissibles](#) we encountered in [\*Dismissible ListTiles\*](#).

### MANY KEYS FOR THE SAME KEYHOLE

There are many kinds of [Keys](#), and some are actually more useful than the plain [Key](#) constructor, which takes as a named argument a [String](#) that must be unique within the widget's parent.

```
ExampleWidget(  
  key: Key("example")  
)
```

[GlobalKeys](#) also exist and, because of their global scope, they have to be absolutely unique.

[GlobalKeys](#) allow for widgets to be moved to be a child of a completely different parent while preserving its state.

There also are [LocalKeys](#), which have the same scope as the normal [Keys](#), but have a few different constructors:

- The [ValueKey](#), which takes a value of any type, not just a [String](#).



- The [UniqueKey](#), which takes no value at all and is always unique (what we used in [Dismissible ListTiles](#)).

## USING KEYS

Most of the time, you don't need to use [Keys](#); they only become necessary when widgets require you to set a [Key](#), as happened when we talked about the [Dismissible](#) in [Dismissible ListTiles](#).

## Where We're Going Next

In the next chapter we'll be using some of the layout widgets we've seen in this chapter together to build a calculator app.

---

### Footnotes

[21] <https://material.io/design/components/dividers.html>

[22] <https://pragprog.com/favicon.png>

[23] <https://material.io/design/components/snackbars.html#anatomy>

[24] <https://material.io/design/components/cards.html>

[25] <https://material.io/design/components/chips.html>

## Chapter 3

# Building a Calculator App

Whew! You've learned a lot about the tools available to you in Flutter. Shall we put them to use? As promised, this chapter will focus on building a calculator app, using some of the structures and elements we saw throughout the previous chapter.

We'll start writing our app by showing you how to go from an empty file to a working Flutter app.

This time, create a Flutter project using the `flutter create appname` command or your IDE of choice, but this time delete everything inside the generated `main.dart`.

## Importing Basic Dependencies

The first thing you should always do is import the dependencies.

In this case, we just need the same Flutter Material library that we used in the previous chapter:

```
layout/calculator/lib/main.dart
```

```
import "package:flutter/material.dart";
```

## Writing main

Let's start from the simplest and least specific part of our app: the `main` function.

### USING A WRAPPER CLASS

In the previous chapter we defined a `MyApp` class and used `main` simply to run it, in the following way:

```
void main() =>
  runApp(MyApp());

class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return MaterialApp(
      // Actual app content and data
    );
  }
}
```

### SKIPPING THE WRAPPER CLASS

The same effect would be achieved by simply writing:

```
void main() {
  runApp(MaterialApp(
    // other app content and data
  ));
}
```

This looks a lot shorter, but in a larger app it isn't really much by comparison.

If your app is entirely contained in one view it doesn't compromise app functionality, but if you need more views and need to have shared data you should consider writing a wrapper class for your app to keep things organized and clear.

And, in any case, you should only use the second form if you really need to keep your code compact or to save time to quickly write a small app.

So we will write the following:

```
layout/calculator/lib/main.dart
```

```
void main() => runApp(MyApp());

class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return MaterialApp(
      title: "Flutter Calculator",
      theme: ThemeData(
        primarySwatch: Colors.blue,
        backgroundColor: Colors.black26
      ),
      home: CalculatorHomePage(title: "Flutter Calculator", ),
    );
  }
}
```

## The Calculator's Home Page

The home page will be stateful because it will have to reflect user interactions and input, so we'll define a simple

`StatefulWidget`:

layout/calculator/lib/main.dart

```
class CalculatorHomePage extends StatefulWidget {  
  CalculatorHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);  
  final String title;  
  
  @override  
  _CalculatorHomePageState createState() => _CalculatorHomePageState();  
}
```

and its state:

layout/calculator/lib/main.dart

```
class _CalculatorHomePageState extends State<CalculatorHomePage> {  
  
}
```

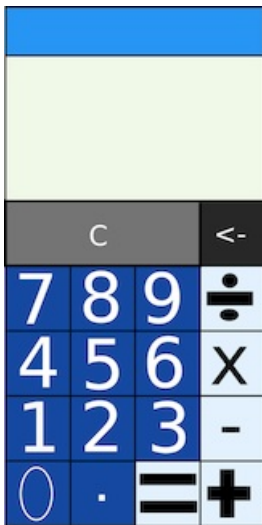
## How the App Will Be Structured

We will be using a separate file with a separate [Calculation](#) class to actually carry out calculations—implementing, adding, and deleting numbers and operators and computing expressions.

We will worry about that in *Implement the Calculations*.

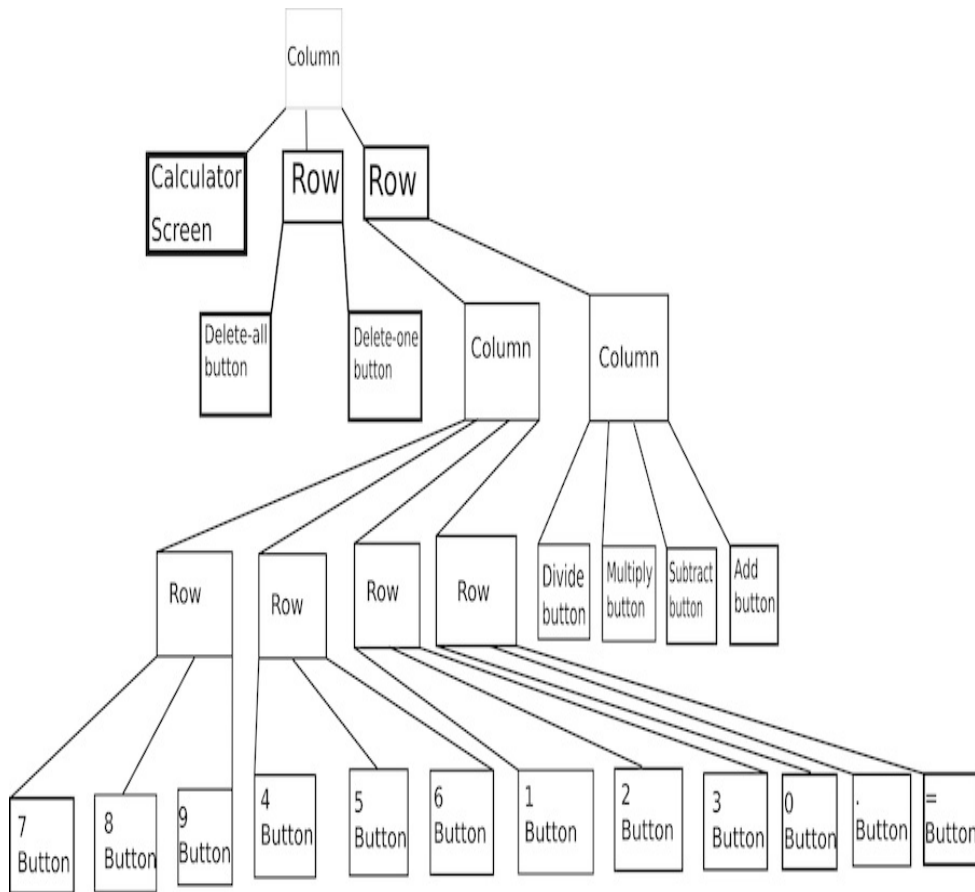
### LAYOUT

The base layout of the app will be the following:



It is a simple calculator, and it can be implemented using the following Flutter layout structures:





Representing Flutter apps as trees is a very effective way to visualize the layout of a Flutter app.

In this case, the app's main structure will be a [Column](#) with three children:

- The calculator's screen, which will a [Card](#) with some [Text](#) on it.
- A [Row](#) containing the button that deletes the entire expression and the button that deletes one character at a time, which will be a couple of [FlatButtons](#).
- A [Row](#) for the rest of the calculator's buttons, which contains two [Column](#) widgets: one for the three columns containing the numbers (which is made up of four [Rows](#) of four buttons each), and one for the column containing the operator buttons.

To make the layout look and work better, we will be making expansive (no pun intended) use of the [Expanded](#), but that will

come later on in *Make the App Look and Work Right with Expanded.*

## Implement the Basic Layout

Inside `_CalculatorHomePageState`'s curly braces, we'll define a `build` method with the usual `Scaffold` and `AppBar`:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override  
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
```

```
  return Scaffold(  
    appBar: AppBar(  
      title: Text(widget.title),  
    ),
```

```
  );  
}
```

The `Scaffold`'s `body` will be the following:

```
body: Column(  
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
  children: <Widget>[  
    calculatorScreen,  
    Row(  
      crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
      children: <Widget>[  
  
        ],  
    ),  
    Row(  
      crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
      children: <Widget>[  
        Column(  
          crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
          children: <Widget>[  
            Row(  
              crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
              children: <Widget>[  
  
                ],  
            ),  
            Row(  
              crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
              children: <Widget>[
```

```

    ],
  ),
  Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[

      ],
    ),
  Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[

      ],
    ),
  ],
),

```

```

Column(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children: <Widget>[

    ],
  ),
  ],
),
  ],
),

```

The [CrossAxisAlignment](#) options are meant to stretch the widgets out wherever possible.

What that alone can't do will be done by [Expanded](#) (we'll talk about [Expanded](#) after we have defined the layout elements).

## Let's Give the Calculator a Screen

Obviously the `calculatorScreen` at the top of the `Column` is just a placeholder; we need to replace it with a real, working screen that will be composed of the following: a wrapping and a `Card` and, inside it, a padded `Text` displaying a `String`, which represents the expression or result to be displayed.

But, before adding that, we need to declare that `String` inside the `_CalculatorHomePageState` declaration, above the `@override` keyword preceding the build method declaration:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
String _str = "0";
```

After you've done that, replace `calculatorScreen` (from the code) with:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
Card(  
  color: Colors.lightGreen[50],  
  child: Padding(  
    padding: EdgeInsets.all(15.0),  
    child: Text(  
      _str,  
      textScaleFactor: 2.0,  
    ),  
  ),  
),
```

Where `Colors.lightGreen[50]` is a very low intensity light green.

Color intensity (50, in this case) is specified on a scale where 500 is normal intensity (like using `Colors.lightGreen`) and higher numbers are higher intensity colors, usually used for accent color purposes.

## Add the Deletion Row

The first `Row` widget is going to contain the button used to delete a single character and the button used to delete the entire expression.

All of the buttons in the app are going to call `_CalculatorHomePageState` methods, so we need to define them. So, directly below `code`, add the following empty method definitions, which we will fill up after we define the class to handle the calculations in *Use the Calculation Inside the App*:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
void add(String a) {  
}  
  
void deleteAll() {  
}  
  
void deleteOne() {  
}  
  
void getResult() {  
}
```

Going back to app layout definition, the buttons will be `FlatButtons`, which you'll add to the first `Row` widget you can see in the `code` by inserting, inside the square brackets of that `Row`'s `children` attribute, the following code:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
FlatButton(  
  child: Text(  
    'C',  
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),  
  ),  
  onPressed: () {deleteAll();},  
  color: Colors.black54,
```

```
),  
FlatButton(  
  child: Text(  
    '<-',  
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)  
  ),  
  onPressed: () {deleteOne();},  
  color: Colors.black87,  
),
```

Using this code will result in the button on the left (delete all) being gray and the one on the right (delete one character) being black.

That is because the number after the color name (which is used in this manner only with black and white) specifies how transparent they are; a low number means that they are very transparent and almost invisible and a high number is used to make something very opaque.

## The Third Row

We have one more [Row](#), which might sound strange until you look back at the structure of the app in the figure [here](#). That row will have two children:

- On the left, the numbers and the *dot* and *equals* buttons.
- On the right, the operator buttons.

## ADD THE NUMBER BUTTONS

The number buttons will be spread out across four rows:

- The first will contain the numbers 7, 8, and 9.
- The second will contain the numbers 4, 5, and 6.
- The third will contain the numbers 1, 2, and 3.
- The fourth will contain the number 0, the *dot*, and the button to calculate the result.

This means that, inside this [Row](#) we'll need another [Column](#) with four [Rows](#) as its children just to display the number buttons.

The buttons will have white text on an intense blue background, except for the = button, which will have black text on a very light blue background. So, as the first child of the third [Row](#) of our app, we'll have the following:

```
layout/calculator_part1/lib/main.dart
```

```
Column(  
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
  children: <Widget>[  
    Row(  
      crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
      children: <Widget>[  
        FlatButton(  
          child: Text(  

```



```

        '7',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('7');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '8',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('8');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '9',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('9');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
  ],
),
Row(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children:<Widget>[
    FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '4',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('4');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '5',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('5');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '6',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('6');},

```

```

        color: Colors.blueAccent,

      ),
    ],
  ),
  Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '1',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('1');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '2',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('2');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '3',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('3');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
    ],
  ),
  Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '0',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('0');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '.',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
      ),
    ],
  ),

```

```
onPressed: () {add('.')};},
color: Colors.blueAccent,

),
FlatButton(
  child: Text('='),
  onPressed: () {
    getResult();
  },
  color: Colors.blue[50],
),
],
),
],
),
```

As you can see, `=` calls `getResult` and the numbers call the `add(number)` method.

## ADD THE OPERATORS

To the right of the numbers, we'll add the operator buttons.

As an example, we'll implement the *divide* button as a `FlatButton` with an image from the assets on it.

To start, create a directory in the root of your project called `icons`.

Inside it, create or copy a file called `divide.png`, which will be the icon used for the divide button. You can find a `divide.png` icon suitable for this in the book's source code or on my website.<sup>[26]</sup>

After you've done that, edit `pubspec.yaml` and add the following at the bottom of it:

[layout/calculator/pubspec.yaml](#)

```
flutter:  
  assets:  
    - icons/
```

Now we can use that image in our code.

To use it, we need to use `Image.asset` as explained in *[Displaying Images from the Assets](#)*.

More specifically for this example, the divide button will be implemented as follows:

layout/calculator\_part1/lib/main.dart

```
FlatButton(  
  child: Image.asset(  
    "icons/divide.png",  
    width: 10.0,  
    height: 10.0,  
  ),  
  onPressed: () {add('÷');},  
  color: Colors.blue[50],  
),
```

The entire `Column` of operator buttons (with the other ones being normal `Text`-based buttons) will therefore be:

layout/calculator\_part1/lib/main.dart

```
Column(  
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,  
  children: <Widget>[  
    FlatButton(  
      child: Image.asset(  
        "icons/divide.png",  
        width: 10.0,  
        height: 10.0,  
      ),  
      onPressed: () {add('÷');},  
      color: Colors.blue[50],  
    ),  
    FlatButton(  
      child: Text('x'),  
      onPressed: () {add('x');},  
      color: Colors.blue[50],  
    ),  
    FlatButton(  
      child: Text('-'),  
      onPressed: () {add('-');},  
      color: Colors.blue[50],  
    ),  
  ],  
)
```

```
        color: Colors.blue[50],  
      ),  
      FlatButton(  
        child: Text('+'),  
        onPressed: () {add('+')},  
        color: Colors.blue[50],  
      ),  
    ],  
  ),  
),
```

The buttons are of the same color as the = button (a very light blue).

## Why a GridView Wouldn't Work

[GridViews](#) are meant for something completely different: building scrollable, probably variable grids that usually have more widgets than could be displayed comfortably in a non-scrollable grid.

What we are doing here is simply displaying a small, fixed amount of I/O widgets in both the vertical and horizontal axis, which you should do using nested [Rows](#) and [Columns](#).

# Make the App Look and Work Right with Expanded

Currently, the app wouldn't look right if you ran it on a device.

To make the buttons of the right shape and size, we need to wrap `Rows`, `Columns`, and the buttons themselves in `Expanded`.

## EXPAND ELEMENTS TO DIVIDE THE SPACE INSIDE THE MAIN COLUMN

We'll expand some elements to make them exactly as big as we want them to be.

In this case, the main `Column` will be divided in the following way:

- 2/7 of the space will be taken up by the calculator screen.
- 1/7 of the space will be taken up by the deletion row.
- The remaining 4/7 of the space (four times as much as the deletion row) will be taken up by the numbers and operators, so that every button (including the delete buttons) is of the same height.

As was explained in *Fill the Space Available in the View Using Expanded*, the `Expanded` widget makes this really simple, requiring you to replace the calculator screen shown in the code with this:

```
layout/calculator_part2/lib/main.dart
```

```
Expanded(  
  flex: 2,  
  child: Card(  
    color: Colors.lightGreen[50],  
    child: Padding(  
      child: Text('Calculator')  
    )  
  )  
)
```

```

child: Padding(
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(15.0),
  child: Text(
    _str,
    textScaleFactor: 2.0,
  ),
),
),
),
),

```

Similarly, the first `Row` widget (the one containing the delete buttons, shown in the code) will have to be replaced with:

```

Expanded(
  flex: 1,
  child: Row(
    ...
  )
)

```

and the one containing the number buttons (shown in the code) will similarly have to be replaced with:

```

Expanded(
  flex: 4,
  child: Row(
    ...
  )
)

```

## EXPAND ELEMENTS TO DIVIDE THE SPACE INSIDE THE DELETION ROW

Three quarters of the space will be taken up by the *delete all* button and one quarter by the *delete one* button.

This means that those two `FlatButtons` will have to be expanded by replacing them with `FlatButtons` wrapped in two `Expanded` widgets with `flex` values of, respectively, 3 and 1:

layout/calculator\_part2/lib/main.dart

```

Expanded(
  flex: 3,
  child: FlatButton(

```



```

        child: Text(
          'C',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {deleteAll();},
        color: Colors.black54,
      ),
    ),
    Expanded(
      flex: 1,
      child: FlatButton(
        child: Text(
          '<-',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
        ),
        onPressed: () {deleteOne();},
        color: Colors.black87,
      ),
    ),
  ),
),

```

## EXPAND ELEMENTS TO DIVIDE THE SPACE INSIDE THE NUMBER AND OPERATOR GRID

Similarly, you will need to expand the numbers' [Column](#) with a [flex](#) of 3 and the operators' [Column](#) with a [flex](#) of 1 to make the buttons all of the same size.

## CREATE EXPANDEDROW AND EXPANDEDBUTTON FOR THE REST OF THE BUTTONS

The number and operator buttons should all be of the same size, so they should all be wrapped in [Expanded](#) widgets with the same [flex](#) which, for simplicity, we'll set to the value 1.

The same is true for the [Rows](#) of number buttons: they all need to be expanded with the same [flex](#).

To avoid repetition and to speed up replacement of many widgets, we'll build expanded [FlatButton](#) and [Row](#) classes, which will be called [ExpandedButton](#) and [ExpandedRow](#).

They need to take all of the arguments and options we currently use, and build the corresponding widgets wrapped in [Expanded](#).

They are defined, very simply, above [main](#), in the following way:

```
layout/calculator_part2/lib/main.dart
```

```
class ExpandedButton extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedButton({this.onPressed, this.child, this.color});

  final Widget child;
  final VoidCallback onPressed;
  final Color color;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex:1,
      child: FlatButton(
        onPressed: onPressed,
        child: child,
        color: color,
      ),
    );
}

class ExpandedRow extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedRow({this.children, this.crossAxisAlignment});

  final List<Widget> children;
  final CrossAxisAlignment crossAxisAlignment;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex:1,
      child: Row(
        children: children,
        crossAxisAlignment: crossAxisAlignment,
      ),
    );
}
```

After defining them, simply replace all of the operator button's `Row` widgets with `ExpandedRow` widgets and all of the operator and number `FlatButton`s and the calculator's layout should be complete.

## The Finished Layout

If you have done everything correctly, you probably have ended up with the following code in [main.dart](#):

layout/calculator\_part2/lib/main.dart

```
import "package:flutter/material.dart";

class ExpandedButton extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedButton({this.onPressed, this.child, this.color});

  final Widget child;
  final VoidCallback onPressed;
  final Color color;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex:1,
      child: FlatButton(
        onPressed: onPressed,
        child: child,
        color: color,
      ),
    );
}

class ExpandedRow extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedRow({this.children, this.crossAxisAlignment});

  final List<Widget> children;
  final CrossAxisAlignment crossAxisAlignment;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex:1,
      child: Row(
        children: children,
        crossAxisAlignment: crossAxisAlignment,
      ),
    );
}
```

```
);  
}
```

```
void main() => runApp(new MyApp());
```

```
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return MaterialApp(  
      title: "Flutter Calculator",  
      theme: ThemeData(  
        primarySwatch: Colors.blue,  
        backgroundColor: Colors.black26  
      ),  
      home: CalculatorHomePage(title: "Flutter Calculator", ),  
    );  
  }  
}
```

```
class CalculatorHomePage extends StatefulWidget {  
  CalculatorHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);  
  final String title;  
  
  @override  
  _CalculatorHomePageState createState() => _CalculatorHomePageState();  
}
```

```
class _CalculatorHomePageState extends State<CalculatorHomePage> {  
  String _str = "0";  
  
  void add(String a) {  
  }  
  
  void deleteAll() {  
  }  
  
  void deleteOne() {  
  }  
  
  void getResult() {  
  }  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Center(child: Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: title,  
      ),  
      body: Text(_str),  
    ));  
  }  
}
```

```
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Center(child: Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: title,  
      ),  
      body: Text(_str),  
    ));  
  }  
}
```

```

title: Text(widget.title),

),
body: Column(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  // mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround,
  // mainAxisSize: MainAxisSize.max,
  children: <Widget>[
    Expanded(
      flex: 2,
      child: Card(
        color: Colors.lightGreen[50],
        child: Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(15.0),
          child: Text(
            _str,
            textScaleFactor: 2.0,
          ),
        ),
      ),
    ),
    Expanded(
      flex: 1,
      child: Row(
        crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
        children: <Widget>[
          Expanded(
            flex: 3,
            child: FlatButton(
              child: Text(
                'C',
                style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
              ),
              onPressed: () {deleteAll();},
              color: Colors.black54,
            ),
          ),
          Expanded(
            flex: 1,
            child: FlatButton(
              child: Text(
                '<-',
                style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
              ),
              onPressed: () {deleteOne();},
              color: Colors.black87,
            ),
          ),
        ],
      ),
    ),
  ],
),

```

```

),
Expanded(

  flex: 4,
  child: Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      Expanded(
        flex: 3,
        child: Column(
          crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
          children: <Widget>[
            ExpandedRow(
              crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
              children: <Widget>[
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '7',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('7');},
                  color: Colors.blueAccent,
                ),
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '8',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('8');},
                  color: Colors.blueAccent,
                ),
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '9',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('9');},
                  color: Colors.blueAccent,
                ),
              ],
            ),
            ExpandedRow(
              crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
              children:<Widget>[
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '4',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('4');},

```

```

        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text(
          '5',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('5');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text(
          '6',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('6');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
    ],
  ),
  ExpandedRow(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text(
          '1',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('1');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text(
          '2',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('2');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text(
          '3',
          style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('3');},
        color: Colors.blueAccent,
      ),
    ],
  ),

```



```

ExpandedRow(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children: <Widget>[
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '0',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('0');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '.',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('.')},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(child: Text('='), onPressed: () {
      getResult();
    },
      color: Colors.blue[50]),
  ],
),
],
),
),
Expanded(
  flex: 1,
  child: Column(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Image.asset(
          "icons/divide.png",
          width: 10.0,
          height: 10.0,
        ),
        onPressed: () {add('÷')},
        color: Colors.blue[50],
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text('x'),
        onPressed: () {add('x')},
        color: Colors.blue[50],
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text('-'),

```

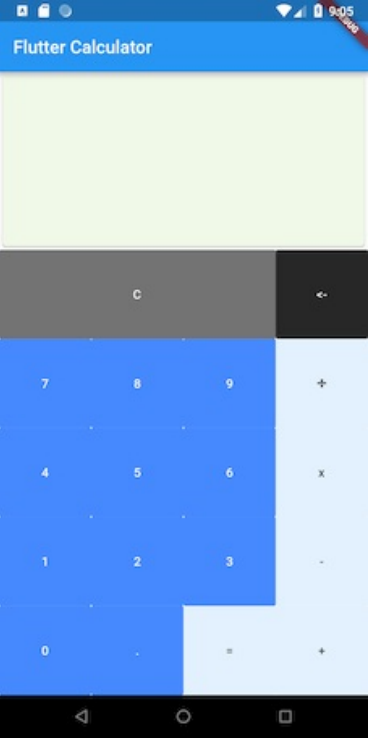
```

        onPressed: () {add('-');},
        color: Colors.blue[50],
      ),
      ExpandedButton(
        child: Text('+'),

        onPressed: () {add('+');},
        color: Colors.blue[50],
      ),
    ],
  ),
),
],
),
));
}
}

```

Running the app produces the following visual result:



## Implement the Calculations

Now it's time to make this really nice-looking calculator work. The way our calculator logic is going to work is not how expressions are usually parsed, but this way will show you how to parse and manipulate strings in Dart, and it will also show you how to do that using regular expressions. It's not the simplest solution and it's surely not the one with the lowest computational complexity, but it's a good example and it is supposed to make you more confident when writing Dart code that operates on strings.

The `Calculation` class needs to handle a few basic operations:

1. Add a digit or operator.
2. Display the current string containing all of the digits and operators that have been added.
3. Compute the result of the current expression.
4. Delete a digit or operator.
5. Delete the entire expression.

Being able to display the current string can also be used for debugging insertion and deletion as it displays the current state of the calculation.

The `Calculation` class needs to be able to take inputs one character at a time and to compute the result of an expression considering mathematical operator precedence rules.

To do that, we will implement the class in the following way: we will have a `List` of `Strings`, each of which will be either an operator or a number to make parsing and computing results simpler.

We will start implementing it by creating a file called `calculator.dart` inside the `lib` directory.

At this point we can start defining our `Calculation` and that data it needs inside `calculator.dart`:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
class Calculation {  
  List<String> a = [];  
  
}
```

The first behavior we'll define is adding a character to the current calculation.

We will implement a method called `add`, which will take as an argument a `String` to be added to the calculation, after checking whether we add a new element to the `List` or not.

If the `String` we want to add is a digit and the previous `String` in the `List` is a number (it doesn't contain an operator), we will append it to the last `String` in the `List`, otherwise it will have to be added as a new element in the `List`.

Also, if the `List` is still empty, we will have to create a new element, unless the character we're trying to add is an operator, in which case we won't do anything at all because the expression wouldn't make sense with an operator as the first element.

To check whether a `String` contains operators we will use a regular expression to shorten the creation of complex conditions and avoid repeating them.

## HOW TO USE REGULAR EXPRESSIONS IN DART

Regular expressions in Dart are achieved using the `RegExp` class.

Its constructor is used in the following way:

```
RegExp regExp = RegExp("REGULAREXPRESSION");
```

In our case, the regular expression to check if a string contains an operator is:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
final RegExp regExp = RegExp("[+\\-x÷]");
```

and we can check that a string (called `string`) matches that regular expression by using:

```
bool matches = regExp.hasMatch(string)
```

In the case of the regular expression we saw earlier, it will be `true` if the string contains an operator character, and `false` if it doesn't.

## IMPLEMENT ADD()

The first thing we will check is whether the `List` is empty and only adding the character if it's not an operator:

```
void add(String added) {
```

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
if(a.isEmpty) {  
  if(!regExp.hasMatch(added)) {  
    a.add(added);  
  }  
}
```

```
}
```

If it's not empty, we need to check whether the previous element was an operator.

In that case, we need to do the same thing we did for the first element—we can't add another operator or a dot, but we can add a digit and it has to go into a separate [List](#) element:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
else if(regExp.hasMatch(a.last)) {  
  if(!RegExp("[+\\-x÷.]").hasMatch(added)) {  
    a.add(added);  
  }  
}
```

If the previous conditions haven't been met (and that means the previous element was a number) we can add anything, but we need to differentiate between operators and digits:

- An operator will have to go into its own separate [List](#) element;
- A digit will have to be appended to the current last [List](#) element.

That can be implemented very simply:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
else {  
  if(regExp.hasMatch(added)) {  
    if(!RegExp(".").hasMatch(a.last)) a.last+=".0";  
    a.add(added);  
  } else {  
    a.last+=added;  
  }  
}
```

So the entire `add` method, combining all of the possible conditions, is:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
void add(String added) {  
  if(a.isEmpty) {  
    if(!regExp.hasMatch(added)) {  
      a.add(added);  
    }  
  }  
}
```

```

else if(regExp.hasMatch(a.last)) {
  if(!RegExp("[+\\|-x÷.]").hasMatch(added)) {
    a.add(added);
  }
}
else {
  if(regExp.hasMatch(added)) {
    if(!RegExp(".").hasMatch(a.last)) a.last+=".0";
    a.add(added);
  } else {
    a.last+=added;
  }
}
}
}

```

## IMPLEMENT GETSTRING()

This is going to be the simplest method—it's just going to display the concatenation of the strings in the [List](#):

layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart

```

String getString() {
  String str = "";
  a.forEach((String el) {str+=el;});
  return str;
}

```

## IMPLEMENT DELETION

To delete everything we just need to reset the [List](#) to its initial state:

layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart

```

void deleteAll() => a = [];

```

But deleting one character at a time is more complicated, as we'll need to check multiple things:

1. Check if the [List](#) is empty, in that case we'll do nothing.
2. Check if the last element of the [List](#) is longer than one character, in that case we'll delete the last character of that string.
3. If the last element is just one character, we'll delete it completely.

Number 2 is a bit complicated: to delete the last character we actually need to assign to the last element a substring of itself with the last character deleted.

To create substrings, we are going to use the `String.substring()` method, which is used in the following way:

```
var substr = string.substring(startIndex, length);
```

where `startIndex` is an integer representing the index at which the substring starts (relative to the string from which the substring is created) and `length` is the length of the substring.

In this case, we need it to start from 0 and to have a length that is equal to the length of the original string with 1 subtracted to it.

Combining all of that, the code for the `deleteOne` method is as follows:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
void deleteOne() {  
  if(a.length > 0) {  
    if(a.last.length > 1) {  
      a.last = a.last.substring(0, a.last.length-1);  
    } else {  
      a.removeLast();  
    }  
  }  
}
```

## IMPLEMENT RESULT CALCULATION

At this point, all that's left to do is to calculate the result of the expression.

Before calculating the result, we'll need to consider the case in which a user accidentally ends the expression with an operator (starting it with an operator is prevented by `add()`).



We also need to check whether the string ends with a ., and that will require us to check whether a dot is left, a condition for which would be the following:

```
a.last.lastIndexOf(".") == a.last.length-1
```

If that condition is true, we need to take the substring with the last character removed.

Since it might end with both an operator and a dot, we need to check twice separately:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
if( regExp.hasMatch(a.last) )  
  a.removeLast();  
if(a.last.lastIndexOf(".") == a.last.length-1)  
  a.last = a.last.substring(0, a.length-1);
```

Now we need to parse the calculation and compute its result.

The divisions we did in the rest of the methods are really useful: we just need to check each element in the `String` and, if it is an operator, we'll substitute the block composed by it and the adjacent elements with the result of the operation.

We will be implementing this using simple counter-based for loops because we need total control over which elements we're parsing.

Because of that, after we compute the result of each sub-calculation, we will decrease the counter by 1 so that the next iteration of the for loop will actually be the operator after the newly calculated result, as the following illustration shows:

50+35-75

Before the calculation:

50	+	35	-	75
0	1	2	3	4

After calculating 50+35

85	-	75
0	1	2

As this example shows, the newly calculated number takes the place that was occupied by the number to the left of the operator and the next operator takes the place of the operator we just considered.

Since the counter is currently at the index of the operator, we will have to decrement the loop's counter so that, when it is incremented again in the next iteration, it is the same value it was in the previous iteration.

Because of mathematical operator precedence rules, we will first check if the [List](#) contains multiplications or divisions:

layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart

```
for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {  
  if(a[i] == "x") {  
    a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) * double.parse(a[i+1])}";  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    i--;  
  } else if(a[i] == "÷") {  
    a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) / double.parse(a[i+1])}";  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    i--;  
  }  
}
```

and then check for additions or subtractions:

layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart

```
for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {
```

```

if(a[i] == "+") {
  a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1])} + double.parse(a[i+1])}";
  a.removeAt(i);
  a.removeAt(i);
  i--;
} else if(a[i] == "-") {
  a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1])} - double.parse(a[i+1])}";
  a.removeAt(i);
  a.removeAt(i);
  i--;
}
}

```

At the end, the `List` should contain just one `String` containing the result of the whole expression.

We'll return that using:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
return double.parse(a[0]);
```

The `getResult` method, combining all of these pieces, is:

```
layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart
```

```

double getResult() {
  if( regexp.hasMatch(a.last) )
    a.removeLast();
  if(a.last.lastIndexOf(".") == a.last.length-1)
    a.last = a.last.substring(0, a.length-1);

  for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {
    if(a[i] == "x") {
      a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1])} * double.parse(a[i+1])}";
      a.removeAt(i);
      a.removeAt(i);
      i--;
    } else if(a[i] == "÷") {
      a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1])} / double.parse(a[i+1])}";
      a.removeAt(i);
      a.removeAt(i);
      i--;
    }
  }

  for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {

```

```

    if(a[i] == "+") {
      a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) + double.parse(a[i+1])}";
      a.removeAt(i);
      a.removeAt(i);
      i--;
    } else if(a[i] == "-") {
      a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) - double.parse(a[i+1])}";
      a.removeAt(i);
      a.removeAt(i);
      i--;
    }
  }

  if(a.length != 1) throw Error();

  return double.parse(a[0]);
}

```

## WRAPPING UP THE CALCULATION

The entire `calculator.dart` should be, at this point, the following:

layout/calculator/lib/calculator.dart

```

class Calculation {
  List<String> a = [];
  final RegExp regExp = RegExp("[+\\-x÷]");

  void add(String added) {
    if(a.isEmpty) {
      if(!regExp.hasMatch(added)) {
        a.add(added);
      }
    }
    else if(regExp.hasMatch(a.last)) {
      if(!RegExp("[+\\-x÷.]").hasMatch(added)) {
        a.add(added);
      }
    }
    else {
      if(regExp.hasMatch(added)) {
        if(!RegExp(".").hasMatch(a.last)) a.last+=".0";
        a.add(added);
      } else {
        a.last+=added;
      }
    }
  }
}

```

```

String getString() {
    String str = "";
    a.forEach((String el) {str+=el;});
    return str;
}

double getResult() {
    if( regExp.hasMatch(a.last) )
        a.removeLast();
    if(a.last.lastIndexOf(".") == a.last.length-1)
        a.last = a.last.substring(0, a.length-1);

    for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {
        if(a[i] == "x") {
            a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) * double.parse(a[i+1])}";
            a.removeAt(i);
            a.removeAt(i);
            i--;
        } else if(a[i] == "÷") {
            a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) / double.parse(a[i+1])}";
            a.removeAt(i);
            a.removeAt(i);
            i--;
        }
    }

    for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {
        if(a[i] == "+") {
            a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) + double.parse(a[i+1])}";
            a.removeAt(i);
            a.removeAt(i);
            i--;
        } else if(a[i] == "-") {
            a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) - double.parse(a[i+1])}";
            a.removeAt(i);
            a.removeAt(i);
            i--;
        }
    }

    if(a.length != 1) throw Error();

    return double.parse(a[0]);
}

```

```

void deleteOne() {
    if(a.length > 0) {
        if(a.last.length > 1) {
            a.last = a.last.substring(0, a.last.length-1);

```

```
    } else {  
      a.removeLast();  
    }  
  }  
}  
  
void deleteAll() => a = [];  
}
```

### Make Your Own Changes

We have seen quite a lot of Dart code so far, but have you also been writing your own? If you haven't, here is a chance for you to make a very simple and slight improvement to our calculator app.

The [Calculation](#) properly handles operator precedence, but it doesn't support parentheses. That's something you should be able to add on your own at this point by using additional regular expressions to find opening and closing parentheses and then evaluate expressions within the parentheses first.

## Use the Calculation Inside the App

Import the [Calculation](#) into the main source code by adding, at the top of [main.dart](#), the following:

```
import "calculator.dart";
```

You need to define a [Calculation](#) object for the [\\_CalculatorHomePageState](#) so, below:

```
layout/calculator/lib/main.dart
```

```
String _str = "0";
```

You need to add:

```
layout/calculator/lib/main.dart
```

```
var _calculation = Calculation();
```

You will also need to properly implement the [\\_CalculatorHomePageState](#)'s [add](#), [deleteOne](#), and [deleteAll](#) methods, which will have to be calls to [setState](#) and the [Calculation](#) methods, like this:

```
layout/calculator/lib/main.dart
```

```
void add(String a) {  
  setState(){  
    _calculation.add(a);  
    _str = _calculation.getString();  
  };  
}  
  
void deleteAll() {  
  setState() {  
    _calculation.deleteAll();  
    _str = _calculation.getString();  
  };  
}
```

```
void deleteOne() {  
    setState() {  
        _calculation.deleteOne();  
        _str = _calculation.getString();  
    });  
}  
  
void getResult() {  
    setState() {  
        _str = _calculation.getResult().toString();  
    });  
    _calculation = new Calculation();  
}
```



## Wrapping Up the Calculator

If you followed everything and correctly put together all of the pieces of code related to the calculator, `main.dart` should be the following:

layout/calculator/lib/main.dart

```
import "package:flutter/material.dart";
import "calculator.dart";

class ExpandedButton extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedButton({this.onPressed, this.child, this.color, Key key}) :
    super(key: key);

  final Widget child;
  final VoidCallback onPressed;
  final Color color;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex:1,
      child: FlatButton(
        onPressed: onPressed,
        child: child,
        color: color,
      ),
    );
}

class ExpandedRow extends StatelessWidget {

  ExpandedRow({this.children, this.crossAxisAlignment});

  final List<Widget> children;
  final CrossAxisAlignment crossAxisAlignment;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Expanded(
      flex: 1,
      child: Row(
        children: children
```

```

        children, children,
        crossAxisAlignment: crossAxisAlignment,
    ),
);
}

```

```

void main() => runApp(MyApp());

```

```

class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return MaterialApp(
      title: "Flutter Calculator",
      theme: ThemeData(
        primarySwatch: Colors.blue,
        backgroundColor: Colors.black26
      ),
      home: CalculatorHomePage(title: "Flutter Calculator", ),
    );
  }
}

```

```

class CalculatorHomePage extends StatefulWidget {
  CalculatorHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);
  final String title;

  @override
  _CalculatorHomePageState createState() => _CalculatorHomePageState();
}

```

```

class _CalculatorHomePageState extends State<CalculatorHomePage> {

  String _str = "0";
  var _calculation = Calculation();

  void add(String a) {
    setState(){
      _calculation.add(a);
      _str = _calculation.getString();
    });
  }

  void deleteAll() {
    setState() {
      _calculation.deleteAll();
      _str = _calculation.getString();
    });
  }
}

```

```

void deleteOne() {
  setState(() {
    _calculation.deleteOne();
    _str = _calculation.getString();
  });
}

```

```

void getResult() {
  setState(() {
    _str = _calculation.getResult().toString();
  });
  _calculation = new Calculation();
}

```

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Center(child: Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text(widget.title),
    ),
    body: Column(
      crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
      // mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround,
      // mainAxisSize: MainAxisSize.max,
      children: <Widget>[
        Expanded(
          flex: 2,
          child: Card(
            color: Colors.lightGreen[50],
            child: Padding(
              padding: EdgeInsets.all(15.0),
              child: Text(
                _str,
                textScaleFactor: 2.0,
              ),
            ),
          ),
        ),
        Expanded(
          flex: 1,
          child: Row(
            crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
            children: <Widget>[
              Expanded(
                flex: 3,
                child: FlatButton(
                  child: Text(
                    'C',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)

```

```

        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {deleteAll();},
      color: Colors.black54,
    ),
  ),
  Expanded(
    flex: 1,
    child: FlatButton(
      child: Text(
        '<- ',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
      ),
      onPressed: () {deleteOne();},
      color: Colors.black87,
    ),
  ),
],
),
Expanded(
  flex: 4,
  child: Row(
    crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
    children: <Widget>[
      Expanded(
        flex: 3,
        child: Column(
          crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
          children: <Widget>[
            ExpandedRow(
              crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
              children: <Widget>[
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '7',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('7');},
                  color: Colors.blueAccent,
                ),
                ExpandedButton(
                  child: Text(
                    '8',
                    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
                  ),
                  onPressed: () {add('8');},
                  color: Colors.blueAccent,
                ),
                ExpandedButton(

```

```

ExpandedButton(
  child: Text(
    '9',
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
  ),
  onPressed: () {add('9');},
  color: Colors.blueAccent,
),
],
),
ExpandedRow(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children:<Widget>[
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '4',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('4');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '5',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('5');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '6',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('6');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
  ],
),
ExpandedRow(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children: <Widget>[

```

```

ExpandedButton(
  child: Text(
    '1',
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
  ),
  onPressed: () {add('1');},
  color: Colors.blueAccent.

```

```

),
ExpandedButton(
  child: Text(
    '2',
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
  ),
  onPressed: () {add('2');},
  color: Colors.blueAccent,
),
ExpandedButton(
  child: Text(
    '3',
    style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white)
  ),
  onPressed: () {add('3');},
  color: Colors.blueAccent,
),
],
),
ExpandedRow(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children: <Widget>[
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '0',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('0');},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text(
        '.',
        style: TextStyle(color: Colors.white),
      ),
      onPressed: () {add('.')},
      color: Colors.blueAccent,
    ),
    ExpandedButton(child: Text('='), onPressed: () {
      getResult();
    },

```

```

      color: Colors.blue[50]),
    ],
  ),
],
),
Expanded(

```

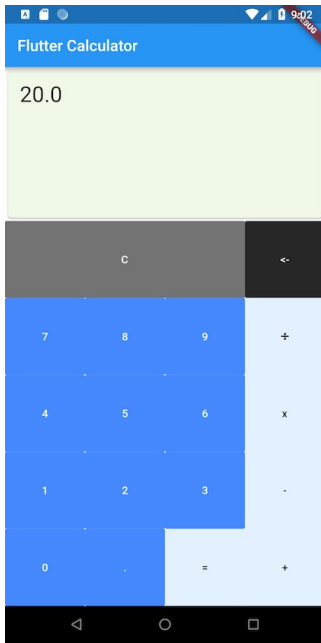
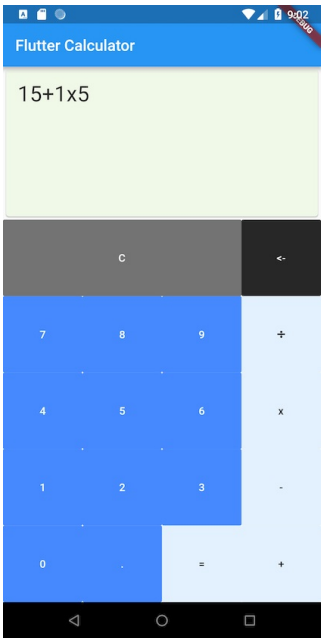
```

flex: 1,
child: Column(
  crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.stretch,
  children: <Widget>[
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Image.asset(
        "icons/divide.png",
        width: 10.0,
        height: 10.0,
      ),
      onPressed: () {add(÷);},
      color: Colors.blue[50],
      key: Key("divide button")
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text('x'),
      onPressed: () {add(x);},
      color: Colors.blue[50],
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text('-'),
      onPressed: () {add(-);},
      color: Colors.blue[50],
    ),
    ExpandedButton(
      child: Text('+'),
      onPressed: () {add(+);},
      color: Colors.blue[50],
    ),
  ],
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
),
);
}
}

```

and produce this working calculator as shown in the screenshots.







## What If We Try to Divide by 0?

We worried about the expression being malformed (syntax errors), but we didn't worry about mathematical errors.

When writing a calculator in most programming languages (especially if using integer arithmetic, which isn't our case), making an app like ours (that doesn't compute square root or trigonometric functions) leaves us exposed to one thing that could make it crash: dividing by 0.

Dart, when using floating-point arithmetic like in our case, is smart enough to display the word *Infinity* instead of a result; this is nice because it doesn't cause the app to crash, but some could argue that it isn't really the correct answer in most cases: as the divisor approaches 0 the quotient approaches infinity, but division by zero in itself is impossible, so you might choose to display an error if you were making a calculator and were so inclined.

If that is the case, you would need to add a condition to each calculation in `Calculation.getResult` to check whether there is an attempt at division by 0, throw an exception and catch it in the calling method.

### Throwing and Catching Exceptions

This section can be considered an anticipation of *Throwing and Catching Exceptions*, we are not going to cover the topic in detail and if you are not used to this kind of programming language feature, you should consider reading that first, and then reading this section.

## DEFINE THE EXCEPTION

An exception in Dart is defined as a subclass of `Exception`, in the

following way:

```
layout/calculator_error_if_divideby0/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
class DivideByZeroException implements Exception {  
    
}
```

## THROW THE EXCEPTION

That exception can be thrown by using:

```
throw DivideByZeroException();
```

In this specific case, inside the definition of `Calculation.getResult` in `calculator.dart`, at the point where we handle divisions (where you find `else if(a[i] == "÷") {}`), we'll add:

```
layout/calculator_error_if_divideby0/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
if(double.parse(a[i+1]) == 0)  
  throw DivideByZeroException();
```

so the part of `getResult` that handles divisions and multiplications becomes:

```
layout/calculator_error_if_divideby0/lib/calculator.dart
```

```
for(int i = 0; i < a.length; i++) {  
  if(a[i] == "x") {  
    a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) * double.parse(a[i+1])}";  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    i--;  
  } else if(a[i] == "÷") {  
    if(double.parse(a[i+1]) == 0)  
      throw DivideByZeroException();  
    a[i-1] = "${double.parse(a[i-1]) / double.parse(a[i+1])}";  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    a.removeAt(i);  
    i--;  
  }  
}
```

## CATCH THE EXCEPTION

Exceptions in Dart are caught using:

```
try {  
  code_that_might_generate_exceptions();  
} catch(exception) {  
  print("$exception");  
}
```

This code catches any kind of exception; if you wanted to catch only certain types of exceptions you would use:

```
try {  
  code_that_might_generate_exceptions();  
} on ExceptionClass catch(exception) {  
  print("$exception");  
}
```

And if you don't need to use the value of the exception you would leave out the `catch(exception)` part:

```
try {  
  code_that_might_generate_exceptions();  
} on ExceptionClass {  
  print("you did something bad");  
}
```

In the specific case, the code that might generate exceptions is the `_str = _calculation.getResult().toString()` function call and assignment and we want to set `_str` to something like *You mustn't divide by 0*.

The `getResult` method will therefore become:

layout/calculator\_error\_if\_divideby0/lib/main.dart

```
void getResult() {  
  setState() {  
    try {  
      _str = _calculation.getResult().toString();  
    }  
    on DivideByZeroException {  
      _str = "You mustn't divide by 0";  
    } finally {  
      _calculation = new Calculation();  
    },  
  },  
}
```

```
    }  
    });  
}
```

Adding a [finally](#) clause to reset the calculation regardless of whether or not the exception was thrown.

## Where We're Going Next

In the next chapter we'll learn how to do things that go beyond the Flutter standard library using packages and plugins and how to make your own library and publish it on Dart Pub.

---

### Footnotes

[26] <http://www.carminzacc.com/divide.png>

## Chapter 4

# **Beyond the Standard Library: Plugins and Packages**

Up until now we've seen how to build apps using just Flutter's standard library, but now we'll discover that we can go beyond it, and do things that we would have had a hard time doing before, or that we couldn't even do at all: let's talk about Flutter packages.

## An Introduction to Packages

Like many languages, Dart allows developers to share modular code, which can be used by other developers to easily get commonly needed functionality that would otherwise require a complicated solution.

There are many generic Dart packages we can use to achieve functionality that is useful to both web applications and Flutter mobile apps, but there are also Flutter-specific packages, which use Flutter-specific features and only work with Flutter apps.

Generally, packages are written in Dart and are very similar to other languages' packages and libraries, but can communicate with device-specific Android/iOS code, which would make them *plugin packages*.

### FINDING PACKAGES: USING DART PUB

You can find packages by going to the *Dart Pub* homepage<sup>[27]</sup> and searching in the “Flutter” and “All” categories.

In the home page you will find the most commonly used packages, many of which are made by Google developers. Clicking on a package allows you to find usage information, how to install the package and a changelog.

### INSTALLING PACKAGES

Once you've found a package you think you might want, you need to install it.

Dart packages get installed when they are specified as a dependency of an app, and you can do this by editing the

`pubspec.yaml` file.

### The Simple Way

Installing a package is very easy: you just need to edit the *dependencies* section of the `pubspec.yaml` file and add the string from the *Installing* section of the package in Pub. The strings you find there look like this:

```
package: ^version
```

And need to be added in `pubspec.yaml`, indented on the same level as the `flutter:` line, after the lines that look like the following:

```
dependencies:  
  flutter:  
    sdk: flutter
```

The IDE plugins download the packages automatically when you edit the file, but you can make Flutter download or update the dependencies by running the following command:

```
$ flutter packages get
```

All that's left to do is to import the package in your Dart file by adding, at the top of the file, the following line:

```
import 'package:package/filename.dart';
```

The file name is the same as the package name in most cases, but it's better to check on Pub, since it's usually specified in the *README.md*, *Example*, or *Installing* sections. If you're using the official IDE plugins the correct file name will also be suggested by the IDE.

`import` also has more features, which are explained in *Mastering import*.

That's all you need to know if the package developers are



using semantic versioning correctly and you just want to get all of the updates for the package that won't break your code, but there are cases in which simply copying and pasting from Pub to the dependencies isn't ideal or doesn't work at all.

### Specifying the Package Version Manually

Understanding how to specify dependencies manually could be useful, for example, when you want to update to the next version, even if you need to change your code.

It could also be useful when you want a specific package version or always the latest package version, like would happen when you are the package developer.

### Caret Syntax

The line we saw before declares that the project is dependent on the latest version of the package from Pub that is declared to be compatible with the version specified. For example, `^0.1.0` means any version in the 0.1 group, and `^1.2.3` means any version greater than or equal to 1.2.3 and less than 2.0.0. This is the most common way to specify the package version, and it is called *caret syntax*.

### Other Ways to Specify the Package Version

The package versions can also be specified using mathematical comparison operators (for example, `>=0.5.9` will use any version starting from 0.5.9).

These operators can also be combined (for example, you can use something like `>=0.5.9 <2.5.3`).

You can also use just:

```
packagename:
```

or:

```
packagename: any
```

if you want Flutter to download the latest version it can find, with no restrictions.

### Fetching Packages from Locations Other Than Pub

The version isn't the only thing that you can specify in the dependencies list: if you don't want the package to be fetched from Pub, you can also specify where you want the package to be fetched from, which you might find useful, for example, when testing a new version that hasn't yet been published or when using a package that isn't on Pub at all.

### Fetching from Git

For example, you can fetch the package from a Git repository:

```
packagename:  
git:  
url: git://github.com/username/packagename.git
```

If the package isn't in the root of the Git repository, you can specify a path within the repository where the package is located:

```
packagename:  
git:  
url: git://github.com/username/packagename.git  
path: path/to/pkg
```

### Fetching from a Local Path

You can also fetch the package from a path in your local development environment:

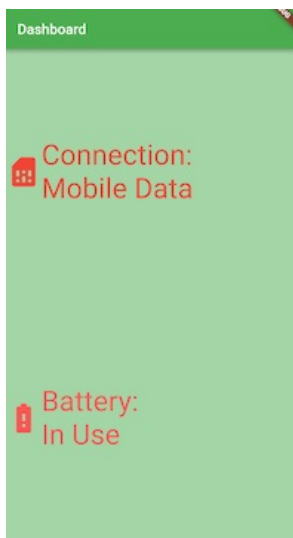
```
packagename:  
path: ../packagename/
```

## Package Usage Example

Now that you know how to install packages, you'll get to see packages in action.

### GETTING STARTED

We are going to build a simple app that displays the phone's battery and connectivity state using the *battery*<sup>[28]</sup> and *connectivity*<sup>[29]</sup> packages from Pub:



To use those packages, we'll start by adding the packages to our app's dependencies, and you can do that by adding the following to the dependencies in [pubspec.yaml](#):

```
packages/battery_connectivity/pubspec.yaml
```

```
connectivity: ^0.3.1  
battery: ^0.2.2
```

And import the packages in our code by adding to the top of the main Dart file the following:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'dart:async';

import 'package:flutter/material.dart';
import 'package:battery/battery.dart';
import 'package:connectivity/connectivity.dart';
```

In addition to the packages we download from Pub, we also need Flutter's standard Material Design API and Dart's `async` library, which is needed to properly handle the asynchronous nature of the packages we are using.

## THE MAIN FUNCTION AND HOME PAGE DEFINITION

The main function looks like any other main function that has been shown throughout this book:

packages/battery\_connectivity/lib/main.dart

```
void main() => runApp(
  MaterialApp(
    title: "Battery and connectivity status",
    theme: ThemeData(primarySwatch: Colors.green),
    home: HomePage("Dashboard"),
  )
);
```

The home page will be a *Stateful* widget, since we want it to change when the battery or connectivity state changes:

packages/battery\_connectivity/lib/main.dart

```
class HomePage extends StatefulWidget {
  HomePage(this.title);

  final String title;

  HomePageState createState() => HomePageState();
}
```

## DEFINING THE HOME PAGE'S STATE

Each battery and connectivity state is going to be shown in the form of a string (like `Mobile Data` or `Full`) and an icon, with each status being represented by a different color:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
class HomePageState extends State<HomePage> {  
  String _connectionStatus = 'Unknown';  
  IconData _connectionIcon;  
  String _batteryStatus = 'Unknown';  
  IconData _batteryIcon;  
  Color _connectionColor = Colors.deepOrange;  
  Color _batteryColor = Colors.deepOrange;  
}
```

### Getting the Battery and Connectivity Data: Asynchronous Programming Using Streams

Since the data we are going to be showing could change at any time, the packages allow the data to be used in the form of *Streams*, which allow your code to listen for changes in the data and define the actions that need to be taken using the new data when it changes.

In this case, we want to change the state of the widget by changing the strings and icons describing the connectivity and battery state.

We can do that using the following code:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
① StreamSubscription<ConnectivityResult> _connSub;  
   StreamSubscription<BatteryState> _battSub;  
  
   @override  
   void initState() {  
     super.initState();  
  
     ② _connSub = Connectivity()  
       .onConnectivityChanged  
       .listen(( ConnectivityResult res) async {  
         setState(() {  
           ③ switch(res) {  
             case ConnectivityResult.mobile:  
               _connectionStatus = 'Mobile Data';  
               _connectionIcon = Icons.sim_card;  
               _connectionColor = Colors.red;  
               break;  
             case ConnectivityResult.wifi:  
               _connectionStatus = 'Wi-Fi';  
           }  
         });  
       });  
   }
```

```

        _connectionIcon = Icons.wifi;
        _connectionColor = Colors.blue;
        break;

    case ConnectivityResult.none:
        _connectionStatus = "No Connection";
        _connectionIcon = Icons.not_interested;
        _connectionColor = Colors.black;
    }
  });
});

④ _battSub = Battery()
    .onBatteryStateChanged
    .listen((BatteryState res) async {
  setState(() {
    switch(res) {
      case BatteryState.charging:
        _batteryStatus = 'Charging';
        _batteryIcon = Icons.battery_charging_full;
        _batteryColor = Colors.blueAccent;
        break;
      case BatteryState.full:
        _batteryStatus = 'Full';
        _batteryIcon = Icons.battery_full;
        _batteryColor = Colors.green;
        break;
      case BatteryState.discharging:
        _batteryStatus = 'In Use';
        _batteryIcon = Icons.battery_alert;
        _batteryColor = Colors.redAccent;
    }
  });
});
}

```

- ① These two lines are used to define the [StreamSubscriptions](#) we'll be using in our app. *subscriptions* are used to run some code when the data returned by a Stream changes.
- ② We are calling the [Connectivity](#) constructor to get an object and listen on its member [onConnectivityChanged Stream](#), which, like all [Streams](#), has a [listen](#) member function, which takes as a positional argument the callback

function to be called when the connectivity changes, which will usually be a call to `setState`, since in most apps a change in a `Stream` means that the app's UI needs to be updated.

- ③ In case you're not familiar with it, the usage of a switch statement is explained in [Switch](#). In this instance, we're using it to set different strings, icons, and colors for each connection and battery status.
- ④ This is the same as what we've seen for the connectivity status, but for the battery status.

Since this code is doing a lot of different things, we'll break this down and explain each part.

## Disposing of the StreamSubscriptions

For each subscription there needs to be an entry to the `dispose` method to dispose of the subscription when it's not needed anymore. `StreamSubscriptions` have a `cancel` method, which does exactly that. Since `State` classes need to override their superclass' `dispose` method (which is the method that runs when that `State` isn't needed anymore, which is when the `StatefulWidget` isn't being rendered anymore), they need to call `super.dispose`:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override
dispose() {
  super.dispose();
  _connSub.cancel();
  _battSub.cancel();
}
```

You can find out more about `Streams` in [Streams and StreamSubscriptions](#).

## DEFINING THE APP'S UI

The `build` method will be the following:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    backgroundColor: Theme.of(context).backgroundColor,
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text(widget.title),
    ),
    body: Column(
      mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround,
      children: <Widget>[
        Row(
          children: <Widget>[
            Icon(_connectionIcon, color: _connectionColor, size: 50.0),
            Text(
              "Connection:\n$_connectionStatus",
              style: TextStyle(
                color: _connectionColor,
                fontSize: 40.0,
              ),
            ),
          ],
        ),
        Row(
          children: <Widget>[
            Icon(_batteryIcon, color: _batteryColor, size: 50.0),
            Text(
              "Battery:\n$_batteryStatus",
              style: TextStyle(
                color: _batteryColor,
                fontSize: 40.0,
              ),
            ),
          ],
        ),
      ],
    ),
  );
}
```

The app's body is a `Column`, with the `mainAxisAlignment` set to `MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround` so the widgets occupy the entire body, instead of being stacked closely on top:



```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
body: Column(
  mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceAround,
  children: <Widget>[
    Row(
      children: <Widget>[
        Icon(_connectionIcon, color: _connectionColor, size: 50.0),
        Text(
          "Connection:\n$_connectionStatus",
          style: TextStyle(
            color: _connectionColor,
            fontSize: 40.0,
          ),
        ),
      ],
    ),
    Row(
      children: <Widget>[
        Icon(_batteryIcon, color: _batteryColor, size: 50.0),
        Text(
          "Battery:\n$_batteryStatus",
          style: TextStyle(
            color: _batteryColor,
            fontSize: 40.0,
          ),
        ),
      ],
    ),
  ],
),
```

The `Column` contains two `Rows`, one showing the connection state, and one showing the battery state.

### Showing the States

The connection state will be shown using a `Row` to show both the string and the icon of the color we set when the state changes:

```
packages/battery_connectivity/lib/main.dart
```

```
Row(
  children: <Widget>[
    Icon(_connectionIcon, color: _connectionColor, size: 50.0),
    Text(
```

```

        "Connection:\n$_connectionStatus",
        style: TextStyle(
          color: _connectionColor,
          fontSize: 40.0,
        ),
      ),
    ],
  ),

```

[packages/battery\\_connectivity/lib/main.dart](#)

```

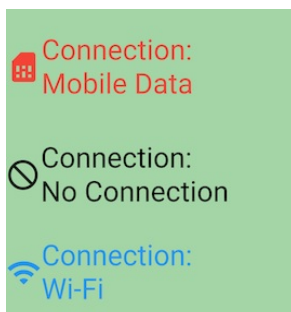
Row(
  children: <Widget>[
    Icon(_batteryIcon, color: _batteryColor, size: 50.0),
    Text(
      "Battery:\n$_batteryStatus",
      style: TextStyle(
        color: _batteryColor,
        fontSize: 40.0,
      ),
    ),
  ],
),

```

The result is that each status is represented by a different Icon and string of a different color for each battery status:



and for each connectivity status:



# Making Your Own Packages

Now that you know how to use a package, you might want to know how to make your own package and how you can write platform-specific code to be used inside a Flutter app.

## CREATING THE PACKAGE

Making a package is a lot like making an app.

If you're using Android Studio, you just need to use File -> New -> New Flutter Project.

If you only need to use multi-platform Dart code for your package, choose the Flutter Package option, if you also need to add iOS(Objective-C/Swift) or Android(Java/Kotlin) code, choose Flutter Plugin.

Interaction between Dart code and platform-specific code is described in *Integrating Native Code: Making Plugin Packages*.

If you're using the command line, run this command:

```
flutter create --template=package packagename
```

If you want to create a plugin, replace the word *package* with *plugin*.

## PACKAGE DEVELOPMENT

Creating a normal Dart-only package is as simple as editing and creating Dart files in the `lib` folder, defining the functions and classes that you want your package to provide, and then publishing it, as explained in *Publishing a Package to Pub*.

## INTEGRATING NATIVE CODE: MAKING PLUGIN PACKAGES

The situation becomes more complicated when you want your package to communicate with platform-specific code, since you'll need to join together three different codebases written in three different languages.

Many native Android/iOS features are available using packages from Pub, but you might need to use a feature that isn't available in Flutter and that isn't supplied by any package, so you'll need to write your own platform-specific code to access that feature.

Although this chapter is about packages, the information in *Connecting Flutter and Platform-Specific Code Together Using Platform Channels* is also useful if you just want to connect Android and iOS code to just one app, without creating a package.

### Creating a Plugin Package

You can create a plugin package using the following command:

```
flutter create --template=plugin packagename
```

This will let you use Java for Android-specific code and Objective-C for iOS code but, especially in the iOS world, those languages are losing ground to Kotlin (for Android) and Swift (for iOS). Flutter actually also provides a template for those languages too, and if you want to use both Swift and Kotlin, you need to run this command instead:

```
flutter create --template=plugin -a kotlin -i swift packagename
```

As we've just seen, you can use `flutter`'s `-a` option to specify the language to use for Android code and `-i` to specify the language for iOS code.

## Connecting Flutter and Platform-Specific Code Together Using Platform Channels

We'll write the interface for our package in Dart, but we'll need to connect it to the platform-specific code, and you can do that using platform channels.

Platform channels aren't exclusive to packages: we can also use them with apps.

The Flutter code calls methods for the platform-specific code to execute through a platform channel, the platform-specific code listens on the channel, receives the method call, performs the actions it needs to perform, and returns a response.

## How Platform Channels Work

To connect to our platform-specific code we'll use the `MethodChannel` class, which is Flutter's side of the interface between Flutter and platform-specific code.

We pass the channel name to its constructor, which is a unique `String` identifier for the channel in the entire app.

Since it has to be unique for the entire app, the channel name is usually prefixed by a domain name.

The channel works the following way: the Dart code invokes methods on the channel, the platform-specific code listens on the channel, waiting for a method call, which is dealt with by a method call handler, which sends the result back to the Dart code.

The response is received by the Dart code in the form of a `Future`.

## Implementing the Flutter Interface in Dart

An example of a basic Flutter interface that can interact with platform-specific code is the following:

```
packages/making_plugins/lib/plugin_example.dart
```

```
import 'dart:async';
import 'package:flutter/services.dart';

class PluginExample {
  static const _platformChannel =
    MethodChannel('example.com/plugin_example');
  static Future<type> exampleMethod async {
    return await _platformChannel.invokeMethod('runExampleMethod');
  }
}
```

We can access platform channels using the *services* library, and we also need to use the *async* library to handle the *Future*, so the following lines need to be placed at the top of your Dart file:

```
packages/making_plugins/lib/plugin_example.dart
```

```
import 'dart:async';
import 'package:flutter/services.dart';
```

Then we define the class that will contain our code and we start by defining the channel we're going to use, which will be *example.com/plugin\_example*:

```
packages/making_plugins/lib/plugin_example.dart
```

```
static const _platformChannel =
  MethodChannel('example.com/plugin_example');
```

This string could be anything: you can prefix it with a real domain, a fake domain, or by no domain at all, but you should prefix it with a real domain if possible to make sure this doesn't clash with any other plugin's channel name. In this regard, it is very similar to Java package names, except the domain prefix is optional in this case.

After you've chosen the channel name, implement the actual interface for the package:

```
packages/making_plugins/lib/plugin_example.dart
```

```
static Future<type> exampleMethod async {  
  return await _platformChannel.invokeMethod('runExampleMethod');  
}
```

where in `Future` you would replace `type` with the type that you want the function to return.

For more information on what data types in Java and Swift correspond to the Dart data types, see the table *Conversion Between Native Java/Apple and Dart Data Types*.

This is what will actually be called by the users of your package, and the only thing to bear in mind is that the way you call platform-specific code is by invoking methods using `platformChannel.invokeMethod(METHOD_NAME)`.

Obviously for such a simple package you could skip defining the `platformChannel` variable and just use `MethodChannel(CHANNEL_NAME).invokeMethod(METHOD_NAME)`, but that would not make the code much shorter and could be a really bad way to do things long term, so stick with declaring the channel beforehand like we showed in the example.

## Implementing the Android Interface in Java

In the `android` directory there will be a source tree that looks just like an app's source tree, with the only difference being the actual content of the files.

An Android-specific Java plugin implementation looks like the following:

```
packages/making_plugins/android/src/main/java/com/example/pluginexample/PluginExamplePlugin.java
```

```
package com.example.pluginexample;

import io.flutter.plugin.common.MethodChannel;
import io.flutter.plugin.common.MethodChannel.MethodCallHandler;
import io.flutter.plugin.common.MethodChannel.Result;
import io.flutter.plugin.common.MethodCall;
import io.flutter.plugin.common.PluginRegistry.Registrar;

public class PluginExample implements MethodCallHandler {
    public static void registerWith(Registrar registrar) {
        final MethodChannel channel =
            new MethodChannel(registrar.messenger(),
                "example.com/plugin_example");
        channel.setMethodCallHandler(new PluginExample());
    }
}
```

```
@Override
public void onMethodCall(MethodCall call, Result result) {
    if (call.method.equals("runExampleMethod")) {
        result.success(DATA_TO_RESPOND_WITH);
    } else {
        result.notImplemented();
    }
}
}
```

Specifically, the Java file will be a class which implements the `MethodCallHandler` trait, and we'll need to define two methods for it: a `registerWith` method, where we'll define what channel to listen on, and an `onMethodCall` which gets called when a method is called on the channel:

```
packages/making_plugins/android/src/main/java/com/example/pluginexample/PluginExamplePlugin.java
```

```
public class PluginExample implements MethodCallHandler {
    public static void registerWith(Registrar registrar) {
        final MethodChannel channel =
            new MethodChannel(registrar.messenger(),
                "example.com/plugin_example");
        channel.setMethodCallHandler(new PluginExample());
    }

    @Override
```



```

public void onMethodCall(MethodCall call, Result result) {
    if (call.method.equals("runExampleMethod")) {
        result.success(DATA_TO_RESPOND_WITH);
    } else {
        result.notImplemented();
    }
}
}

```

Let's start dissecting the code by looking at `registerWith`:

```

packages/making_plugins/android/src/main/java/com/example/pluginexample/Plu
ginExamplePlugin.java

```

```

public static void registerWith(Registrar registrar) {
    final MethodChannel channel =
        new MethodChannel(registrar.messenger(), "example.com/plugin_example"
    );
    channel.setMethodCallHandler(new PluginExample());
}

```

This method is comparable to `initState` in Flutter widgets: here you would add any action that has to be performed once and is necessary for the functionality of the package, including setting the class as the method call handler for the channel the plugin operates on.

More specifically, when a method is invoked, `onMethodCall` gets called, with two arguments: one describing the call and another providing an interface to return a result.

`onMethodCall` could be defined in the following way:

```

packages/making_plugins/android/src/main/java/com/example/pluginexample/Plu
ginExamplePlugin.java

```

```

@Override
public void onMethodCall(MethodCall call, Result result) {
    if (call.method.equals("runExampleMethod")) {
        result.success(DATA_TO_RESPOND_WITH);
    } else {
        result.notImplemented();
    }
}
}

```

Since a plugin might call different methods on the same channel, the `call` argument provides information about the method call, more specifically:

- `call.method`, which is the name of the method that is being called, in this case this would be `"runExampleMethod"`.
- `call.arguments`, which contains the arguments supplied by the caller code (if there are any), this topic is explained in greater detail in [Adding arguments to Method Calls](#).

The result is returned using the `result` argument: running `result.success(DATA)` will return DATA to the calling code, whereas running `result.notImplemented` will tell the calling code that the method that was called has not been implemented in the platform-specific code.

## Implementing the iOS Interface in Swift

When you create a Swift plugin project, in the `ios/Classes` folder, you will find a Swift file where you will write the iOS-specific code:

```
packages/making_plugins/ios/Classes/SwiftPluginExamplePlugin.swift
```

```
import Flutter
import UIKit

public class PluginExample: NSObject, FlutterPlugin {
    public static func register(with registrar: FlutterPluginRegistrar) {
        let channel =
            FlutterMethodChannel(
                name: "example.com/plugin_swift",
                binaryMessenger: registrar.messenger()
            )
        let handler = PluginExample()
        registrar.addMethodCallDelegate(handler, channel: channel)
    }
}
```

```
public func handle(call: FlutterMethodCall, result: @escaping
FlutterResult) {
    if(call.method == "runExampleMethod") {
```

```

        result(DATA)
    }
}

```

Instead of having a `MethodChannel` and a `MethodCall`, you'll use a `FlutterMethodChannel` and a `FlutterMethodCall`, but most of the same principles apply.

Registering is slightly different:

packages/making\_plugins/ios/Classes/SwiftPluginExamplePlugin.swift

```

public static func register(with registrar: FlutterPluginRegistrar) {
    let channel =
        FlutterMethodChannel(
            name: "example.com/plugin_swift",
            binaryMessenger: registrar.messenger()
        )
    let handler = PluginExample()
    registrar.addMethodCallDelegate(handler, channel: channel)
}

```

The `FlutterMethodChannel` constructor arguments are named and not positional and you can set the method handler by using the `FlutterPluginRegistrar`'s `addMethodCallDelegate` method, passing the handler class as a positional argument and the channel as a named argument:

packages/making\_plugins/ios/Classes/SwiftPluginExamplePlugin.swift

```

registrar.addMethodCallDelegate(handler, channel: channel)

```

`onMethodCall` becomes `handle` and instead of using `result.success` to return data it is just `result`, with the rest of the differences being down to variations in syntax between Java and Swift:

packages/making\_plugins/ios/Classes/SwiftPluginExamplePlugin.swift

```

public func handle(call: FlutterMethodCall, result: @escaping
FlutterResult) {
    if(call.method == "runExampleMethod") {
        result(DATA)
    }
}

```

```
,  
}
```

## Adding arguments to Method Calls

Getting a value from a platform-specific API is useful, but sometimes you need to pass arguments to the called code, and you can do that by passing another argument to `invokeMethod`.

The arguments will then be available in Android's `MethodCall` and iOS's `FlutterMethodCall` in `call.arguments`.

Its type is `dynamic` in Dart, `Object` in Java, and `id` in Objective-C, meaning it could be anything.

For example, let's pass an integer number and multiply it by 10 to see how it's done.

The Dart interface is fairly simple:

```
static Future<int> multiplyBy10(int n) async {  
  return await platformChannel.invokeMethod('multiplyBy10', n);  
}
```

In the Android code, after casting the type of the arguments to `int`, it's as simple as returning the number multiplied by 10:

```
if(call.method.equals("multiplyBy10")) {  
  result.success(((int) call.arguments)*10);  
}
```

For the iOS code, in `call.arguments` you'll get an `NSNumber` `NSNumberWithInt`, so it takes a few extra steps to achieve this:

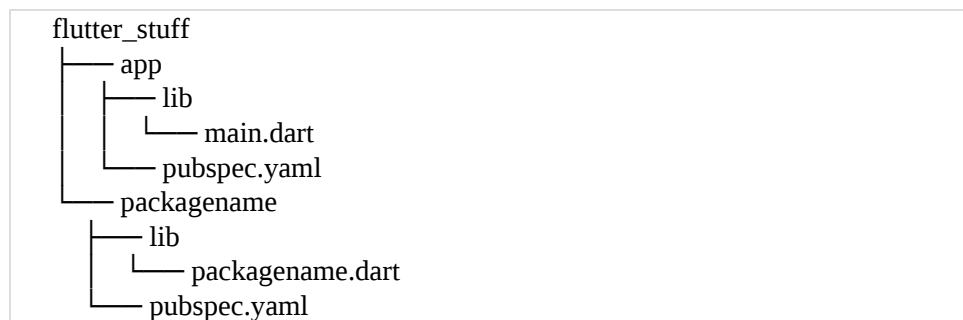
```
if(call.method == "multiplyBy10") {  
  let arg = call.arguments as! NSNumber  
  result(NSNumber(value: arg.integerValue * 10))  
}
```

Given that the `NSNumber` contains the actual number in the

`integerValue` member, that's what we need to multiply by 10. After we've done that, we convert it back to an `NSNumber` and send it back to the calling code. For more information about the type conversions between Dart and platform-specific code, the section *Conversion Between Native Java/Apple and Dart Data Types* lists the most important ones.

## USING THE PACKAGE IN AN APP WITHOUT PUBLISHING TO PUB

Let's suppose you have a directory structure that looks like the following:



and you want the app in the `app` directory to use the package in the `packagename` directory.

As we explained in *Fetching Packages from Locations Other Than Pub*, you can just add:

```
packagename:
  path: ../packagename/
```

to the dependencies in `pubspec.yaml` and add:

```
import 'package:packagename/packagename.dart';
```

to `app/libmain.dart` and you will be able to access the package just like you would if you had used Pub.

## Publishing a Package to Pub

Before you publish a package, you need to make sure you've filled in the package name, version, description, and any other information that you want to specify in `pubspec.yaml`, using Appendix 2, *Apple-Like Look and Additional App Configuration* as a reference.

A `LICENSE` file is also required.

If you don't know what license to use, the Dart developers recommend the two-clause BSD license,<sup>[30]</sup> but there are many resources online to compare licenses, like `choosealicense.com`<sup>[31]</sup> by GitHub.

You should also create a `README.md` file, as this will be used as a home page for your package in Pub.

At this point, simply run:

```
pub publish
```

in the command line and, if you have done everything correctly, your package will be publicly available on Pub.

## Packages for Windows, macOS, and Linux

Flutter supports desktop platforms at an experimental stage. This means you could also develop Flutter plugins for desktop platforms.

For up-to-date information on the state of this feature, you should consult Google's dedicated *flutter-desktop-embedding* GitHub repository.<sup>[32]</sup>

## Where We're Going Next

Now that we know how packages work, we'll be able to use one of the most important features packages provide: HTTP networking, as we'll see in the next chapter.

---

### Footnotes

[27] <https://pub.dartlang.org/flutter>

[28] <https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/battery>

[29] <https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/connectivity>

[30] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BSD\\_licenses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BSD_licenses)

[31] <https://choosealicense.com/licenses/>

[32] <https://github.com/google/flutter-desktop-embedding>



## Part 2

# Doing More with Flutter

---

*Flutter is expandable and flexible. We've already seen how it works, so now we'll look at how Flutter's many features can be used to actually build useful apps.*

*In the chapters in this part you'll learn how to make HTTP requests, how to test and handle exceptions in Flutter apps, and then how to use Firebase to create a chat app.*

*The appendices will be about Dart syntax, Cupertino (iOS-like) widgets, pubspec.yaml, and how to change app name and launcher icon.*

---

## Chapter 5

# Network and Storage I/O and Navigation

Writing apps that are isolated to the user's own phone is fine for some applications, but a great majority of apps need to interact with a web API or back end, which is what we'll be doing in this chapter.

Flutter's standard library doesn't include a standard networking component: even though you can actually use the network to fetch images, you can't make standard HTTP requests using just the Flutter/Dart standard library.

This is the reason why we are going to talk about it now: Flutter has a Google-developed package on Pub called *http*, which allows us to make HTTP requests and connect our app to a Web API.

## The API

Since talking about actually creating a back end for your app would deviate significantly from the scope of this book, we'll be using a simple HTTP API that requires no authentication: the popular comic site XKCD's API.

### WHY XKCD?

You are probably already familiar with the XKCD website: its comics are often shared in engineering and computer-related communities (especially software development ones), and the XKCD API is very simple to use and requires no authentication, which means you will be able to use the code examples in this chapter without having to update placeholder API keys with ones you get by signing up for the usage of the API like you would if the example was about an API that requires authentication.

### HOW THE XKCD API WORKS

The XKCD API, like is the case for most HTTP end-points, sends JSON responses to simple GET requests.

#### Getting Data About XKCD Comics

For example, sending a standard GET request to <https://xkcd.com/info.0.json> returns something like this:

```
{
  "month": "1",
  "num": 2097,
  "link": "",
  "year": "2019",
  "news": "",
  "safe_title": "Thor Tools",
  "transcript": "",
  "alt": "CORRECTION: After careful evaluation," +
    "we have determined that the" +
```

```
"axis label on this chart was printed backward.",  
"img": "https://imgs.xkcd.com/comics/thor_tools.png",  
"title": "Thor Tools",  
"day": "11"  
}
```

which describes the latest comic XKCD has published, and you can see the current result yourself by navigating to that page in the browser.

### The JSON Data

If you have never worked with JSON, it is just a way to describe an object from any object-oriented programming language (or, even more closely, a C-like struct) with a string: it is a single entity containing multiple fields, each one describing something different about the entity it's describing.

In this case, it's the latest comic XKCD has published and the following information about it:

- Which month it was released on (1 for January).
- The numerical ID for the comic (progressive, starting from 1 for the first ever XKCD comic).
- The link clicking the comic image on the websites points to<sup>[33]</sup> (usually empty).
- The year the comic was published.
- A usually empty *news* field.
- The text-only title of the comic (the normal *title* might contain HTML tags).
- A textual transcript (a description) of what's happening in the comic image, which hasn't been added to comics since number 1674.
- *alt* is an explanation of the joke or additional text meant to be viewed after seeing the comic image itself. It has been included in the official website in two ways: the desktop version displays it when the mouse hovers over the image, and the mobile version displays it when a button below the image is tapped.

- The comic image itself.
- The comic title, potentially containing HTML tags.
- The day of the month on which the comic was published.

In Dart code, we can parse and decode the JSON data and store it in a Dart `Map` using the `dart:convert` built-in Dart library, which provides the necessary `json.decode(JSON)` method to convert a JSON `String` to a Dart object, as well as a `json.decode(var)` method (which we won't use) that converts compatible Dart objects to JSON-formatted `Strings`.

#### How the Convert Library Works

The `dart:convert` library provides the `json` constant,<sup>[34]</sup> which is of type `JsonCodec`,<sup>[35]</sup> which has two methods: `json.decode`, which takes a `String` as an argument and can return any Dart object, as its return type is `dynamic`, meaning it could be anything.

The other method is `json.encode`, which does the exact opposite: it takes any Dart `Object` (again, it could be anything) and returns a `String` that can be used—for example, as part of a POST request if that's what we needed to do, and as we'll do later in the book.

#### Getting Previous Comics

You can get the comics published prior to the current (and latest) one by sending a get request to <https://xkcd.com/num/info.0.json> where `num` is the comic number in chronological order (starting from 1); for example, you can get the first one by sending a GET request to <https://xkcd.com/1/info.0.json>.

There is no way to get a list of the comics from the API, but we can make a list of comics in reverse chronological order (from the latest to the earliest) by simply fetching the latest comic, then using its ID number (let's call it `latestNum`) to fetch the comics with numbers that go from `latestNum-1` to 1.

## The http Package

To make GET requests we need to use the *http* package. You can find the http package on Dart Pub.<sup>[36]</sup>

Let's start by creating a new Flutter app project using:

```
$ flutter create xkcd_app
```

and installing the HTTP package by adding the following to [pubspec.yaml](#):

```
networking/xkcd_app/pubspec.yaml
```

```
dependencies:  
  http: "^0.12.0+1"
```

Run `flutter packages get` to download and install the package if you aren't using the IDE plugins (which will do it automatically for you after you make changes to [pubspec.yaml](#)).

## USING THE HTTP PACKAGE

The HTTP package can be used to make HTTP requests of all kinds.<sup>[37]</sup>

All of them are asynchronous, which means that, by default, they are ran in a separate thread without affecting the rest of the app's execution. You can choose to make them behave exactly like synchronous functions if their return value is vital to the prosecution of the app's execution.

### Asynchronous Code in Dart

There are many ways to run asynchronous code in Dart, outlined in *Asynchronous Code in Dart: The `dart:async` Library*, but the basic concept has already been explained in

the previous chapter: calls to functions that return a `Future` (or `Stream`, which we won't be using in this chapter) and run in a separate thread are called asynchronous.

We can get the data returned by an asynchronous function by using an `await` expression:

```
var returnedData = await asyncFunction();
```

This can only be done in `async` functions and `async` functions have to return `Futures`, so asynchrony tends to propagate to all of the calling methods.

### Making GET Requests

An HTTP request is made using `http.get`, which is an `async` method that returns a `Response` inside a `Future`.

We can unwrap the inner `Response` using `await`:

```
var latestComicResponse = await http.get("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json");
```

and we can get the body of the response as a `String` by querying its `body` attribute, like we will need to do when we build our XKCD app:

```
var latestComicString = latestComicResponse.body;
```

We could also do everything in one line, enclosing the `await` expression in parentheses:

```
var latestComicString = (await http.get("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json")).body;
```

HTTP headers can be set by setting the `headers` named arguments to a `Map<String, String>`, like in the following example:

```
http.get(
  "http://example.com/exampleGet?testAttr=$val1&testAttr2=$val2",
  headers: {
    "Accept": "application/json",
```

```
        "Accept-Charset": "utf-8"  
    }  
)
```

Wikipedia has a comprehensive list of standard HTTP headers.  
<sup>[38]</sup>

The `http` package also provides `http.read()` and `http.readBytes()`, which are, respectively, just like `http.get()`'s `body` and `bodyBytes` attributes.

For example, you could go from calling:

```
String res = (await http.get("http://example.com")).body;
```

to just:

```
String res = await http.read("http://example.com");
```

or go from:

```
String res = (await http.get("http://example.com")).bodyBytes;
```

to just:

```
String res = await http.readBytes("http://example.com");
```

Be careful, though, as you lose other attributes of the `Response` object (the type of data `http.get` returns), such as:

- `headers`, which is needed when you need to read the response's headers;
- `contentLength`, which is the size (in bytes) of the response.

### Making Other Requests

Other kinds of HTTP requests are also supported, and all of them support setting headers in the way we've just seen and all of them return `Future<Response>` objects:

- A POST request is made using `http.post`, the request URL is provided as a positional argument and you can set the request body by setting the `body` named argument to whatever you want.



- A PUT request is made using `http.put`, the request URL is provided as a positional argument and you can set the request body by setting the `body` named argument to whatever you want.
- A DELETE request is made using `http.delete`, the request URL is provided as a positional argument.
- A PATCH request is made using `http.patch`, the request URL is provided as a positional argument and you can set the request body by setting the `body` named argument to whatever you want.
- A HEAD request is made using `http.head`, the request URL is provided as a positional argument.

Whenever it's possible to add a `body` attribute it's also possible to add an `encoding` attribute, which is of type `Encoding` and is used to define the body's encoding. Some `Encoding` subclasses are `AsciiCodec` and `Utf8Codec`.

## PARSING THE JSON RESPONSE BODY

The HTTP response body is just a string, so it is not useful unless it is parsed.

Manually parsing it would be incredibly time-consuming and pointless, since the `dart:convert` built-in library already provides a constant called `json`, which is of type `JsonCodec`, meaning it exposes two methods:

- `json.encode(obj)`, which converts the `obj` object to a JSON string.
- `json.decode(str)`, which converts the `str` JSON string to a Dart object.

In our specific case, we want to convert a JSON string to a `Map<String, dynamic>`, which allows us to access each of the comic's attributes by name as we'll see in the next section.

Using `dart:convert`, if we had previously stored the response body of a call to XKCD's API to a variable called `latestComicString`, we would be able to convert it to a `Map` by using:

```
Map<String, dynamic> latestComic = json.decode(latestComicString);
```

So the code we would add to our app if we needed to store the latest comic in a `Map` variable is:

```
Map<String, dynamic> latestComic = json.decode(  
  await http.read("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json")  
);
```

## Writing Methods to Fetch Comics

A consideration has to be done before continuing with the implementation: the optimal data type to store comics is `Map<String, dynamic>`, which handles JSON objects perfectly.

Given that we know how to fetch comics, let's start writing some code to use that knowledge to write methods to fetch comics that we can use in our app!

### FETCHING THE LATEST COMIC

Wrapping the code we discussed earlier into an arrow function isn't hard at all:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchLatestComic() async =>
  json.decode(
    await http.read("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json")
  );
```

We can access a `Map`'s field a lot like we would access `List` elements by using `varName["attrName"]` where `varName` is the name of the `Map` variable and `attrName` is the name of the attributes. This is exactly the same syntax used in Python to access dictionary elements. This is how you access every attribute:

```
var comic = fetchLatestComic();
int num = comic["num"];
String link = comic["link"];
String news = comic["news"];
String safe_title = comic["safe_title"];
String transcript = comic["transcript"];
String alt = comic["alt"];
ImageProvider img = NetworkImage(comic["img"]);
String title = comic["title"];
String MDYDate = "${comic["month"]}/${comic["day"]}/${comic["year"]}";
String DMYDate = "${comic["day"]}/${comic["month"]}/${comic["year"]}";
```

### FETCHING PREVIOUS COMICS

Fetching by comic number is easy since the API is designed to do just that:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic(int n) async =>
  json.decode(
    await http.read("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json")
  );
```

But sorting reverse chronological is a lot harder, as we need to know the latest comic number to get the previous, and so on:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic(int n) async {
  int latestComicNum = ...;
  return json.decode(
    await http.read("https://xkcd.com/info.0.json")
  );
}
```

The obvious way to do that would be to just call `fetchLatestComic` and get the `num` attribute, like this:

```
int latestComicNum = fetchLatestComic()["num"];
```

But doing it that way would require two different GET requests to fetch each comic, and many of them are going to be redundant and useless.

## FETCHING THE LATEST COMIC NUMBER JUST ONCE

Since we are going to use these methods inside an app, which will have a wrapper class around it (at least for the home screen), we can just pass it to that class when we run the app and then the `fetchComic` method inside that class will be able to access it directly.

### The New `fetchComic`

Fetching a comic is really simple this way, since we don't need to worry about the latest comic number, which will be provided by the class in which we'll define the method:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic(int n) async =>
  ison.decode(
```

```
json.decode(  
  await http.read(  
    "https://xkcd.com/${latestComicNum-n}/info.0.json"  
  )  
);
```

### A Function to Get the Latest Comic Number

We need to get the latest comic number when we run the app though, and to do that we need to define a function that will fetch that when we need it:

```
Future<int> getLatestComicNumber() async =>  
  json.decode(  
    await http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')  
  )  
  ["num"];
```

### What If There's No Internet Connection?

If there is no Internet connection, the app will not work. This is a problem but, since we are downloading all of the comics anyway, we should be able to fix it just by saving them to permanent local storage so that we can load them when there is no Internet connection.

This has the added advantage of giving us the chance to optimize our app in a significant way: if we have the previous comics on local storage we don't need to fetch them from the Internet, so we finally eliminate all the redundant GET requests and we can just focus on getting new data when we need it.

# What You Need to Build the UI:

## Navigation and the InheritedWidget

Before we actually build the UI for this app, we're going to discuss two important things: how to navigate between multiple views in Flutter and how to use [InheritedWidgets](#). This will be a general introduction to the options Flutter offers for navigation; we'll only use some of these in the app. If you'd prefer to jump ahead to more advanced navigation, take a look at [Build the App's Basic UI](#) and then come back here when you want to learn about how to implement navigation in Flutter apps.

### NAVIGATION IN FLUTTER

Flutter offers multiple options for navigating between views:

- [push/pop](#) navigation, useful when there is a home page and many pages accessible from it, potentially using a [Drawer](#) menu.
- Page-by-page navigation using the [PageView](#) and [PageController](#), useful when there are a limited number of pages that can be considered on the same level.

### PUSH/POP NAVIGATION USING THE NAVIGATOR

Making an app that takes advantage of the [Navigator](#) for [push/pop](#) navigation is really simple.

#### Define the Pages

The first thing to do is to define the pages, which will be really simple:

```
class NewPage extends StatelessWidget {  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
```

```

return Scaffold(
  appBar: AppBar(title: Text("New Page")),
  body: Center(
    child: FlatButton(
      color: Colors.black12,
      onPressed: () {},
      child: Text("Go back to the home page"),
    )
  ),
);
}
}

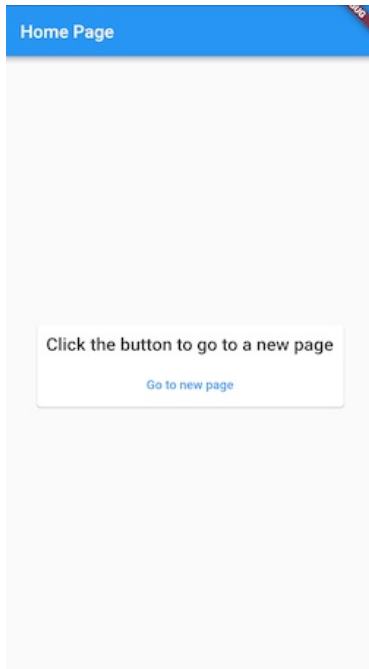
class HomePage extends StatelessWidget {

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(title: Text("Home Page")),
      body: Center(
        child: Container(
          height: 100,
          child: Card(
            child: Column(
              children: <Widget>[
                Padding(
                  padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
                  child: Text(
                    "Click the button to go to a new page",
                    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
                  ),
                ),
                ButtonTheme.bar(
                  child: FlatButton(
                    child: Text("Go to new page"),
                    onPressed: () {}
                  ),
                ),
              ],
            ),
          ),
        ),
      ),
    );
  }
}

```

which generates the following app in its initial state as shown

in the screenshot.



I made the home page a bit more complex than it needed to be to differentiate the two pages visually.

Now comes the important part: that `onPressed` option for both pages, inside which we are going to add the navigation code.

I called this type of navigation “push”/“pop” because it uses two methods called `Navigator.push` and `Navigator.pop`.

### Push

You can navigate to a new page (contained in a `Widget` called `NewPage`) using the `Navigator.push` in the following way:

```
Navigator.push(  
  context,  
  MaterialPageRoute(  
    builder: (context) => NewPage(),  
  ),  
);
```

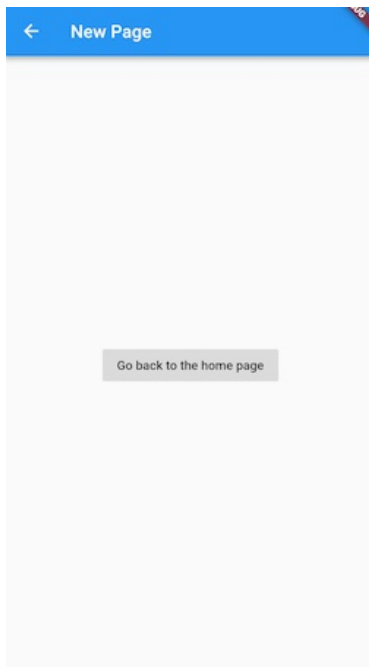
`Navigator.push` takes two arguments: the `BuildContext` and a `Route` to



the new page.

You can create a route using the [MaterialPageRoute](#) constructor, which uses a builder callback function (which can be a call to the widget's constructor, as is the case in the example) to build the new view.

You can put that code inside the curly braces of the [onPressed](#) option for the [FlatButton](#) inside [MyHomePage](#) and the following view will be displayed when the user taps the button:



### Pop

Even though the framework by itself has added a (working, by the way) *back* button in the top left, it is useful to know how to make a custom button to go back.

It is also incredibly simple:

```
Navigator.pop(context);
```

Adding that code to the curly braces of the [onPressed](#) attribute of [NewPage](#)'s [FlatButton](#), tapping that button in the middle of the

screen will make the app go back to the home page.

## USING A DRAWER SIDE NAVIGATION MENU

A commonly seen navigation element is the [Drawer](#),<sup>[39]</sup> which is the menu, seen in many apps, that opens by swiping right starting from the left edge of the screen or by tapping the commonly seen button with three vertically stacked horizontal lines.

Like many items that are commonly used and placed outside the app body, a drawer is added to the app by using the [drawer](#) option of the [Scaffold](#) and setting it to a [Drawer](#) object:

```
Scaffold(  
  appBar: AppBar(title: ...),  
  drawer: Drawer(  
    child: ...  
  ),  
  body: ...,  
)
```

The [Drawer](#) class takes just three arguments (excluding the [Key](#)), which makes it one of the simplest widgets in the entire Flutter standard library in this respect.

Since one of them is the [semanticLabel](#) (which is a string used by accessibility tools such as screen readers to describe what they're seeing) and the other is the [elevation](#) (which is a [double](#), also present in the [Card](#), which is used to customize the shadow behind it), the only one that we're currently interested in is the [child](#), which is usually a [Column](#) or a [ListView](#) (if you're worried about items not having enough vertical space).

For this example, we'll use a [ListView](#).

Very often, the first element in the list is a [DrawerHeader](#), which is a lot like a [Container](#) and usually includes either account

information and facilities to switch accounts (if present), the name of the app and/or information about its creators, or a short description of what the menu is for.

Below it, a number of [ListTiles](#) are used to display navigation options.

If you decide to use a [ListView](#), you should set its [padding](#) option to [EdgeInsets.zero](#) to avoid having gaps at the top and bottom of the screen.

Since we're talking about navigation so much, a [Drawer](#) for a public transportation or travel app could be the following:

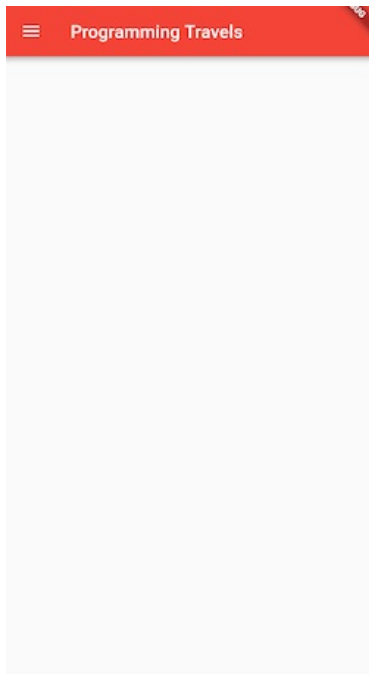
```
Drawer(  
  child: ListView(  
    padding: EdgeInsets.zero,  
    children: [  
      DrawerHeader(  
        decoration: BoxDecoration(  
          color: Colors.red,  
        ),  
        child: Column(  
          crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.start,  
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.end,  
          children: [  
            Text(  
              "Profile Name",  
              style: TextStyle(  
                color: Colors.white,  
                fontSize: 18,  
              ),  
            ),  
            Text(  
              "email@example.com",  
              style: TextStyle(  
                color: Colors.white,  
                fontSize: 11,  
                fontWeight: FontWeight.w300  
              ),  
            ),  
          ],  
        ),  
      ),  
    ],  
  ),  
)
```

```

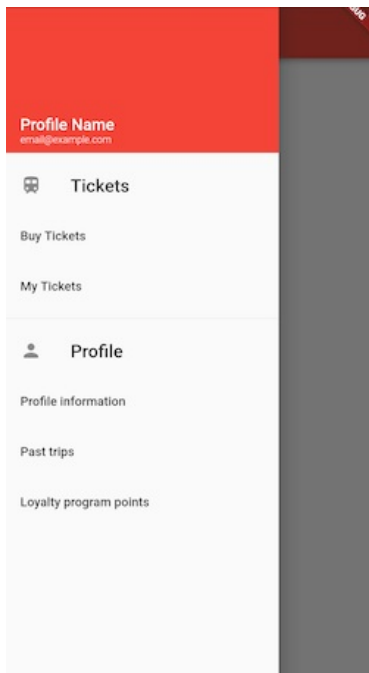
ListTile(
  leading: Icon(Icons.train),
  title: Text(
    "Tickets",
    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
  ),
),
ListTile(title: Text("Buy Tickets"), onTap: () {}),
ListTile(title: Text("My Tickets"), onTap: () {}),
Divider(),
ListTile(
  leading: Icon(Icons.person),
  title: Text(
    "Profile",
    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
  ),
),
ListTile(title: Text("Profile information"), onTap: () {}),
ListTile(title: Text("Past trips"), onTap: () {}),
ListTile(title: Text("Loyalty program points"), onTap: () {}),
],
)
),

```

First of all, it's important to clarify that just adding a [drawer](#) to a [Scaffold](#) causes the framework to automatically add a button to the app bar to expand it, as you can see with an empty [Scaffold](#) body as shown in the [screenshot](#).



The [Drawer](#) itself looks like this:



At this point, you might not be sure about how to actually use the drawer for navigation purposes, and that is because it's not done using [Navigator.push](#), but by changing the state of the home page and some data that can be used by [build](#) to build the page and, after doing that, calling [Navigator.pop](#) to go back to the home

page.

This means the home page has to be a stateful widget (don't forget that, especially if you get a *setState isn't defined for HomePage* error) and it is a great chance to introduce Dart `enums`.

### Enumerated Types

You can create an enumerated type of data by code like the following:

```
enum PageType {  
  buyTickets,  
  myTickets,  
  profileInfo,  
  pastTrips,  
  myPoints  
}
```

which creates a new type called `PageType` which can only be one of `PageType.buyTickets`, `PageType.myTickets`, `PageType.profileInfo`, `PageType.pastTrips`, or `PageType.myPoints`.

Even if you are not used to this kind of data type, you'll surely be able to understand it with the continuation of the travel app example.

### Finishing Our Travel App's Navigation

To finish the travel app's navigation, add the code to your app outside any class definition and a complete, working example of a `State` that implements the functionality I described is the following:

```
class HomePageState extends State<HomePage> {  
  
  PageType _pageType = PageType.buyTickets;  
  String _str;  
  String _sub;  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    // ...  
  }  
}
```

```

Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  switch(_pageType) {
    case PageType.buyTickets:
      _str = "Buy Tickets";
      _sub = "You can buy your tickets here";
      break;
    case PageType.myPoints:
      _str = "My Points";
      _sub = "You can buy check your loyalty program points here";
      break;
    case PageType.myTickets:
      _str = "My Tickets";
      _sub = "You can see the tickets you've bought here";
      break;
    case PageType.pastTrips:
      _str = "My Past Trips";
      _sub = "You can check the trips you have made previously here";
      break;
    case PageType.profileInfo:
      _str = "My Profile Information";
      _sub = "You can see your profile information here";
  }
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("Programming Travels"),
      backgroundColor: Colors.red,
    ),
    drawer: Drawer(
      child: ListView(
        padding: EdgeInsets.zero,
        children: [
          DrawerHeader(
            decoration: BoxDecoration(
              color: Colors.red,
            ),
          ),
          child: Column(
            crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.start,
            mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.end,
            children: [
              Text(
                "Profile Name",
                style: TextStyle(
                  color: Colors.white,
                  fontSize: 18,
                ),
              ),
              Text(
                "email@example.com",
                style: TextStyle(
                  color: Colors.white,

```

```

        fontSize: 11,
        fontWeight: FontWeight.w300
      ),
    ),
  ],
),
),
ListTile(
  leading: Icon(Icons.train),

```

```

    title: Text(
      "Tickets",
      style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
    ),
  ),
  ListTile(
    title: Text("Buy Tickets"),
    onTap: () {
      setState(
        () => _pageType = PageType.buyTickets,
      );
      Navigator.pop(context);
    }
  ),
  ListTile(
    title: Text("My Tickets"),
    onTap: () {
      setState(
        () => _pageType = PageType.myTickets,
      );
      Navigator.pop(context);
    }
  ),
  Divider(),
  ListTile(
    leading: Icon(Icons.person),
    title: Text(
      "Profile",
      style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title,
    ),
  ),
  ListTile(
    title: Text("Profile Information"),
    onTap: () {
      setState(
        () => _pageType = PageType.profileInfo,
      );
      Navigator.pop(context);
    }
  ),
),

```



```
ListTile(
  title: Text("Past Trips"),
  onTap: () {
    setState(
      () => _pageType = PageType.pastTrips,
    );
    Navigator.pop(context);
  }
),
```

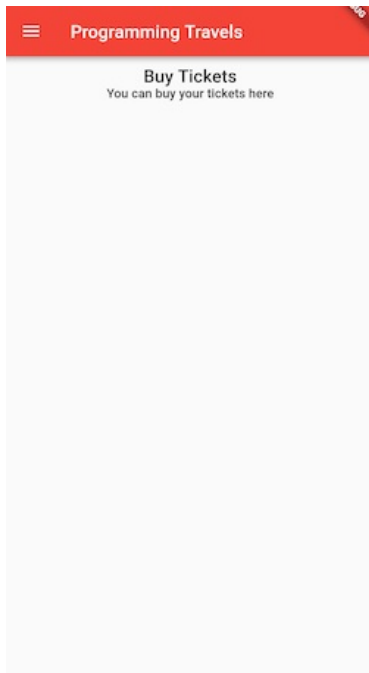
```

    ListTile(
      title: Text("Loyalty Program Points"),
      onTap: () {
        setState(
          () => _pageType = PageType.myPoints,
        );
        Navigator.pop(context);
      }
    ),
  ],
)
),
Center(
  child: Padding(
    padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
    child: Column(
      children: [
        Text(_str, style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title),
        Text(_sub, style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle)
      ],
    ),
  ),
),
);
}
}
```

As you can see, each of the [Drawer](#)'s [ListTile](#) sets the `_pageType` variable (which, by default, is [PageType.buyTickets](#)), reloads the home page using `setState` and then calls `Navigator.pop` to close the drawer.

`build` checks which of them is the current `_pageType` and sets two strings (a title and a subtitle) accordingly. Those two strings are then displayed in a centered and padded [Column](#) as shown in

the screenshot.



The result is working navigation using a [Drawer](#) menu.

## PAGE-BY-PAGE NAVIGATION

Swipeable page-by-page navigation can be achieved using two kinds of view: the [PageView](#) and the [TabBarView](#), the difference is that the first only allows navigation by swiping, whereas the second is used together with a [TabBar](#) below the [AppBar](#).

If, instead, you just want something like the YouTube app: being able to switch between pages using a menu at the bottom of the screen, the way to go is with a [BottomNavigationBar](#).

## BOTTOMNAVIGATIONBAR

A [BottomNavigationBar](#) works a lot like a [Drawer](#), but it's always visible at the bottom, so you don't need to use [Navigator.pop](#).

More specifically, you add it to the [Scaffold](#)'s [bottomNavigationBar](#) option, and you use it like this:

```

return Scaffold(
  // app body, appBar, etc.
  bottomNavigationBar: BottomNavigationBar(
    currentIndex: index,
    items: [
      BottomNavigationBarItem(
        icon: Icon( ... ),
        title: Text( ... ),
      ),
      BottomNavigationBarItem(
        icon: Icon( ... ),
        title: Text( ... ),
      ),
      // potentially more navigation items...
    ],
    onTap: (page) {
      setState(() {
        switch(page) {
          case 0:
            // Things to do if the user selects the first item
            index = 0;
            break;
          case 1:
            // Things to do if the user selects the second item
            index = 1;
            // Potentially other cases for more navigation items
          }
        });
      },
    ),
  )
)

```

It has three main options:

- The **items**, which are the navigation options to be given to the user.
- The **currentIndex**, the value to which you assign will have to be changed manually when the user taps on a navigation item.
- The **onTap** callback, which takes an integer indicating which option has been tapped by the user.

A practical example of a full app home page class could be the following:

```

String _str;
int index = 0;

```

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  switch(index) {
    case 0:
      _str = "Home";
      break;
    case 1:
      _str = "Page 2";
      break;
    case 2:
      _str = "Page 3";
  }
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("Bottom Navigation Bar Example"),
      backgroundColor: Colors.red,
    ),
    body: Center(
      child: Text(
        "$_str",
        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1
      ),
    ),
    bottomNavigationBar: BottomNavigationBar(
      currentIndex: index,
      items: [
        BottomNavigationBarItem(
          icon: Icon(Icons.home),
          title: Text("Home"),
        ),
        BottomNavigationBarItem(
          icon: Icon(Icons.looks_two),
          title: Text("Page 2"),
        ),
        BottomNavigationBarItem(
          icon: Icon(Icons.format_list_numbered_rtl),
          title: Text("Page 3"),
        ),
      ],
      onTap: (page) {
        setState() {
          switch(page) {
            case 0:
              index = 0;
              break;
            case 1:
              index = 1;
              break;
            case 2:

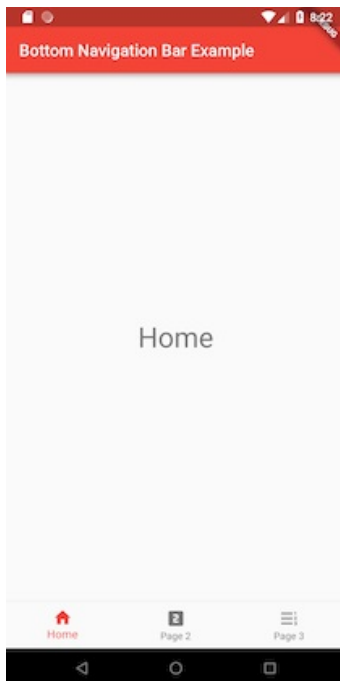
```

```

        index = 2;
      }
    });
  },
),
);
}

```

which looks like the [screenshot](#) and produces the desired behavior when the user taps on a navigation option.



## PageView

The [PageView](#) is comparable to a horizontal [ListView](#), but that only scrolls page by page.

You can use it as a part of the overall layout, but also as the entire body of the app's [Scaffold](#), like in the following example:

```

Scaffold(
  appBar: AppBar(
    title: Text("PageView Example"),
    backgroundColor: Colors.teal,
  ),
  body: PageView(
    children: <Widget>[

```

```

children: <widget>
  Center(
    child: Text(
      "Swipe left",
      style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1
    ),
  ),
  Center(
    child: Padding(
      padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
      child: Text(
        "Swipe left again, or swipe right",
        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1
      ),
    ),
  ),
),

```

```

Center(
  child: Text(
    "Swipe right",
    style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1
  ),
),
],
),
)

```

which produces a simple view with an [AppBar](#) and, in the middle of the screen, a [Text](#) widget.

There is no other on-screen indication that the view has other pages, but swiping left moves the view to the next page and swiping right moves the view to the previous page.

In addition to the [children](#), the [PageView](#) has a [controller](#) attribute, which can be set to a [PageController](#).

The [PageController](#) has a useful option: the [initialPage](#), which is an integer specifying the page (starting from 0) at which the view starts when the app loads.

## TOP NAVIGATION WITH A TABBAR AND TABBARVIEW

Significantly more useful and common is the [TabBarView](#) which,

paired with a [TabBar](#) below the [AppBar](#), provides the same swiping experience of a [PageView](#) combined with a nice menu at the top to select which page to switch to and to highlight the page the user is currently at.

The [TabBarView](#) and the [TabBar](#) are linked by a [TabController](#).

An elegant way to create one is by wrapping the entire view in a [DefaultTabController](#), and setting the entire [Scaffold](#) as its [child](#), the number of tabs as its [length](#), and (optionally) an [initialIndex](#) (starting from 0, which is the default).

The [TabBar](#) can be set as the [AppBar](#)'s [bottom](#) option and it has a [tab](#) option where you'll add the [Tab](#) widgets, made up of a [text](#) and an optional [icon](#), which will be the menu items which will make up the [TabBar](#).

The [TabBarView](#) will instead be set as the [Scaffold](#)'s body and you will add the pages to be displayed to its [children](#) option.

For example, this:

```
DefaultTabController(  
  length: 3,  
  // OPTIONAL initialIndex: 0,  
  
  child: Scaffold(  
    appBar: AppBar(  
      title: Text("TabBarView Example"),  
      bottom: TabBar(  
        tabs: <Widget>[  
          Tab(  
            icon: Icon(Icons.looks_one),  
            text: "First Page",  
          ),  
          Tab(  
            icon: Icon(Icons.looks_two),  
            text: "Second Page",  
          ),  
          Tab(  
            icon: Icon(Icons.looks_three),  
            text: "Third Page",  
          ),  
        ],  
      ),  
    ),  
  ),  
)
```

```

        icon: Icon(Icons.looking_glass),
        text: "Third Page",
      ),
    ],
  ),
),
body: TabBarView(
  children: <Widget>[
    Center(
      child: Text("This is the first page")
    ),
    Center(
      child: Text("This is the second page")
    ),
    Center(
      child: Text("This is the third page")
    ),
  ],
)
),
)

```

which produces the result as shown in the screenshot.



### InheritedWidgets

The [DefaultTabController](#) is a special kind of widget: an



`InheritedWidget`, which is used to share state information between Flutter widgets, by storing them in a widget that sits at the top of the widget tree and allowing direct access to its fields and methods by its children, so that they don't need to be passed down the tree using constructor arguments.

They are usually accessed using the `Widget.of(context).fieldName` syntax that we used previously to get theming data from the `Theme` and to show snackbars in the `Scaffold`. That is because both the `Theme` and the `Scaffold` are actually `InheritedWidgets`.

An `InheritedWidget` is defined in the following way:

```
class Example extends InheritedWidget {  
  Example({child, this.field}):  
    super(child: child);  
  final String field;  
  
  @override  
  bool updateShouldNotify(Example old) => true;  
}
```

`updateShouldNotify` is used to determine whether the children widgets have to be rebuilt when the `InheritedWidget` gets rebuilt by the framework.

That will usually be `true`, but there you can also set it to a set of conditions to determine whether, for example, there are changes to the widget's fields and only rebuild the `children` in that case.

In its current state, `Example.of(context).fieldName` from a child of `Example` wouldn't work since there is actually no `of` method.

Even though it is very common, it is not actually built into the framework: by default you access parent `InheritedWidgets` using `context.inheritFromWidgetOfExactType(Example)`.

In fact, a very common static method (explained on *Static Members*) defined inside `InheritedWidgets` is the `of` method which, in the case of an `InheritedWidget` called `Example`, can be defined in the following way:

```
static Example of(BuildContext context) =>
  context.inheritFromWidgetOfExactType(Example);
```

so that our entire `Example` class definition becomes:

```
class Example extends InheritedWidget {
  Example({child, this.field}): super(child: child);
  final String field;

  @override
  bool updateShouldNotify(Example old) => old.field != field;

  static Example of(BuildContext context) =>
    context.inheritFromWidgetOfExactType(Example);
}
```

You can use it inside an app like this:

```
Example(
  field: "An example of a string",
  child: MyCustomExternalWidget(),
)
```

And, at any point inside the definition of `MyCustomExternalWidget`, which takes no arguments, you could access that `field` you set using:

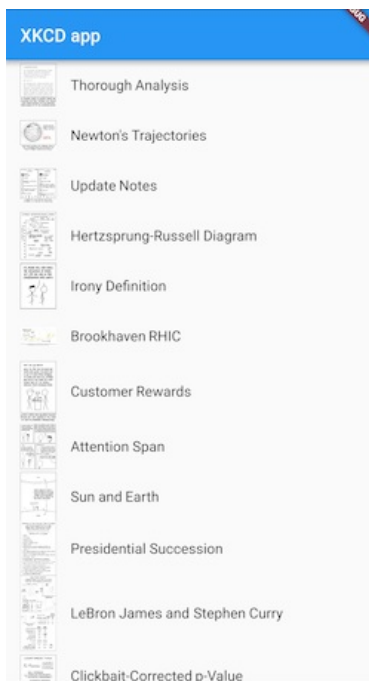
```
Example.of(context).field
```

which returns the exact `String` that was set earlier.

## Build the App's Basic UI

We'll build an app that is going to display a `ListView` of `ListTiles`. There will be a tile for each comic and tapping on a tile should display the details of that comic.

The home is going to look like the screenshot.



Let's start by defining the classes we need for this app:

- A class for the home screen.
- A custom `ComicTile` class to make creating `ListTiles` for the comics easier.
- A class for the comic page.

For a change, we won't be using an app class; the `main` method will pass the needed data directly to the `HomeScreen` class we're going to create:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
void main() async =>
  runApp(
    new MaterialApp(
      home: HomeScreen(
        title: 'XKCD app',
        latestComic: await getLatestComicNumber(),
      )
    )
  );
```

The `getLatestComicNumber` method is the one we created in [A Function to Get the Latest Comic Number](#), and we need to define it at the start of the file, after the library imports and outside any class definitions:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<int> getLatestComicNumber() async =>
  json.decode(
    await http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')
  )
  ["num"];
```

## DEFINE THE HOME SCREEN

At this point we need to define the `HomeScreen` widget. This time the app tree is very simple and we don't need a figure to get the big picture: the `HomeScreen` will be a normal `Scaffold`, with an `AppBar` (as always), and as a `body` it will have a `ListView` made of `ListTiles`.

Since we need a `ListTile` for each comic, we'll use the `ListView.builder` constructor, as seen in [The ListView](#), which uses an `itemBuilder` function to generate each widget. In this case, the `itemBuilder` will be a call to a `FutureBuilder`, which is a kind of item builder that builds widgets based on the contents of a `Future`, which is what we need since `http.get` is an asynchronous function that returns a `Future`.

Let's start writing the class definition with the basics: it will be a `StatelessWidget` and it needs two parameters—the title that should appear in the `AppBar` and the latest comic number:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
class HomeScreen extends StatelessWidget {  
  HomeScreen({this.title, this.latestComic});  
  final int latestComic;  
  final String title;
```

```
}
```

At this point we'll finish doing the preparatory work on the class by defining a `_fetchComic` method, just like the one we talked about in *The New fetchComic*:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async =>  
  json.decode(  
    await http.read(  
      "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"  
    )  
  );
```

Now all that's left to do is the fun part: defining the UI we want for our app in the `build` method. We'll start by defining the `Scaffold` and `AppBar`, as we always do:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override  
Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
  return Scaffold(  
    appBar: AppBar(  
      title: Text(title),  
    ),
```

```
  );  
}
```

The `Scaffold`'s `body` will be, as we said, a `ListView.builder`-built `ListView`, and we need to give it two arguments:

- An `itemCount`, which is the maximum number of items that will be built; in this case, it will be the `latestComic` number, since that's also the number of comics that have ever been published.
- An `itemBuilder`, which is a function called with the `BuildContext` and an `int` that starts from 0 at the top (we'll call it `i`).

In this case the `itemBuilder` is going to be, as we said before, a `FutureBuilder`.

The `FutureBuilder`, in turn, requires two arguments: a `future`, which is the `Future` that will retrieve the data needed for each tile, and a `builder` function, which builds the tile taking the `BuildContext` and the result of the `Future`.

The `future` will be a call to `fetchComic(i)` where `i` is the aforementioned progressive integer variable and the `itemBuilder` will return a `ComicTile` that takes the comic data as an argument. We'll worry about implementing the `ComicTile` itself later.

#### On the Correct Use of the FutureBuilder



The `FutureBuilder`'s `future` shouldn't be a function call: it should be a previously obtained `Future` because setting it to a function call would result in the `future` being called every time the parent widget is rebuilt, but that doesn't apply in our case: the parent widget is a `StatelessWidget` and there are no `StatefulWidget`s above. You need to remember this when you build your own Flutter apps though: forgetting this could make app interactions needlessly slow and clunky.

Usually these `Futures` should be obtained in the `initState` method of `StatefulWidget`s.

Here is the full `body` of the `HomeScreen`'s `Scaffold`:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
body: ListView.builder(
  itemCount: latestComic,
  itemBuilder:(context, i) => FutureBuilder(
    future: _fetchComic(i),
    builder: (context, comicResult) =>
      comicResult.hasData ?
        ComicTile(comic: comicResult.data) :
        Divider();
  ),
),
```

The full `HomeScreen` class definition, combining all of the pieces of code we saw earlier, is:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
class HomeScreen extends StatelessWidget {
  HomeScreen({ this.title, this.latestComic});
  final int latestComic;
  final String title;

  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async =>
    json.decode(
      await http.read(
        "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"
      )
    );

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(
        title: Text(title),
      ),
      body: ListView.builder(
        itemCount: latestComic,
        itemBuilder:(context, i) => FutureBuilder(
          future: _fetchComic(i),
          builder: (context, comicResult) =>
            comicResult.hasData ?
              ComicTile(comic: comicResult.data) :
              Divider();
        ),
      ),
    );
  }
}
```

```
);  
}  
}
```

## DEFINE THE COMICTILE

Now we need to define the `ComicTile` class, which will be yet another `StatelessWidget` and it will take the comic data it needs to display as its only argument:

networking\_starting/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
class ComicTile extends StatelessWidget {  
  ComicTile({this.comic});
```

```
  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;
```

The `ComicTile` will be a `ListTile` that has the comic image as the `leading`, a comic title `Text` as its `title` and, when tapped, displays a new screen just for that comic, showing the comic in a bigger format along with its *alt-text*.

We'll worry about building the comic page later: we now need to figure out how to show that screen. We talked about push/pop navigation earlier in [Push/Pop Navigation Using the Navigator](#), and that's what we're going to use:

```
@override  
Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
  return ListTile(  
    ① leading: Image.network(  
      comic["img"],  
      height: 30,  
      width: 30  
    ),  
    ② title: Text(comic["title"]),  
    ③ onTap: () {  
      Navigator.push(  
        context,  
        MaterialPageRoute(  
          builder: (BuildContext context) => ComicPage(comic)  
        ),  
      );  
    },  
  );  
}
```



```

    },
  );
}

```

- ① In this section we define the [leading](#) widget of the [ListTile](#): an [Image](#) taken from the network URL provided (the comic's 'img' attribute).

We set the maximum width and height for the image preview to 30 pixels to avoid having the previews take up too much vertical or horizontal space in the list.

- ② This is the text that will appear for each tile. In this case we use the comic's title, taken from the comic's [title](#) attribute.
- ③ Here we set what will happen when the user taps on the tile. In this case, it opens a [ComicPage](#) (that we'll define later) using the [push](#) operation we discussed in [Push/Pop Navigation Using the Navigator](#).

The full [ComicTile](#) class definition is:

networking\_starting/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```

class ComicTile extends StatelessWidget {
  ComicTile({this.comic});

  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return ListTile(
      leading: Image.network(
        comic["img"],
        height: 30,
        width: 30
      ),

```

```

      title: Text(comic["title"]),
      onTap: () {

```

```
onTap: () {  
  Navigator.push(  
    context,  
    MaterialPageRoute(  
      builder: (BuildContext context) =>  
        ComicPage(comic)  
    ),  
  );  
},  
);  
}  
}
```

## Building the Comic Page

The `ComicPage` is going to be the simplest of the widgets we talked about until now: we're going to give it an `AppBar` that shows the comic number, and the body is simply going to be a scrollable `ListView` that shows the comic's title, image and alt-text:

`networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart`

```
class ComicPage extends StatelessWidget {
  ComicPage(this.comic);

  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(title: Text("#${comic["num"]}")),
      body: ListView(children: <Widget>[
        Center(
          child: Text(
            comic["title"],
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display3,
          ),
        ),
        Image.network(comic["img"]),
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(8.0),
          child: Text(comic["alt"])
        ),
      ]),
    );
  }
}
```

All of that adds up to the following `main.dart`:

`networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart`

```
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';
```

```

import 'package:http/http.dart' as http;

import 'dart:async';
import 'dart:convert';

Future<int> getLatestComicNumber() async =>
  json.decode(
    await http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')
  )
  ["num"];

void main() async =>
  runApp(
    new MaterialApp(
      home: HomeScreen(
        title: 'XKCD app',
        latestComic: await getLatestComicNumber(),
      )
    )
  );

class ComicPage extends StatelessWidget {
  ComicPage(this.comic);

  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return Scaffold(
      appBar: AppBar(title: Text("#${comic["num"]}")),
      body: ListView(children: <Widget>[
        Center(
          child: Text(
            comic["title"],
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display3,
          ),
        ),
        Image.network(comic["img"]),
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(8.0),
          child: Text(comic["alt"])
        ),
      ],),
    );
  }
}

```

```
class ComicTile extends StatelessWidget {  
  ComicTile({this.comic});
```

```
  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;
```

```
  @override
```

```
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
```

```
    return ListTile(  
      leading: Image.network(  
        comic["img"],  
        height: 30,  
        width: 30  
      ),  
      title: Text(comic["title"]),  
      onTap: () {  
        Navigator.push(  
          context,  
          MaterialPageRoute(  
            builder: (BuildContext context) =>  
              ComicPage(comic)  
          ),  
        );  
      },  
    );  
  }
```

```
  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async =>  
    json.decode(  
      await http.read(  
        "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"  
      )  
    );  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: Text(title),  
      ),  
      body: ListView.builder(  
        itemCount: latestComic,  
        itemBuilder: (BuildContext context, int index) =>  
          ComicTile(comic: comic[index])  
      )  
    );  
  }
```

```
class HomeScreen extends StatelessWidget {  
  HomeScreen({this.title, this.latestComic});
```

```
  final int latestComic;
```

```
  final String title;
```

```
  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async =>  
    json.decode(  
      await http.read(  
        "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"  
      )  
    );  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: Text(title),  
      ),  
      body: ListView.builder(  
        itemCount: latestComic,  
        itemBuilder: (BuildContext context, int index) =>  
          ComicTile(comic: comic[index])  
      )  
    );  
  }
```

```

itemBuilder:(context, i) => FutureBuilder(
  future: _fetchComic(i),

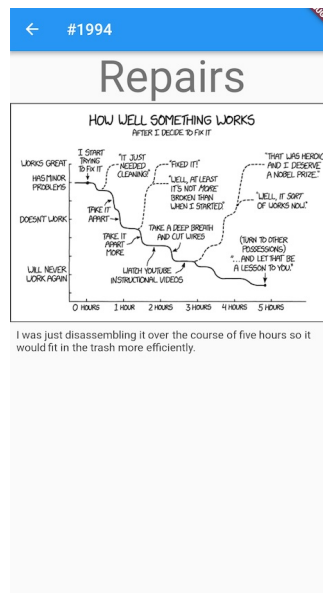
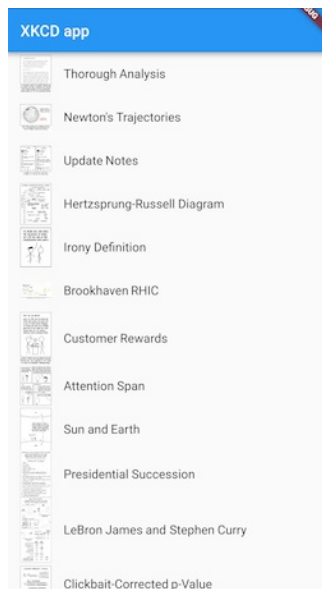
```

```

builder: (context, comicResult) =>
  comicResult.hasData ?
  ComicTile(comic: comicResult.data) :
  Divider();
),
),
);
}
}

```

At this point we're ready to run the app, which is going to look like this:



## Using the `CircularProgressIndicator`

In those screenshots you see what the app looks like when everything has finished loading, but we also need to think about what it looks like while it's still in the process of loading: we currently display a `Divider` when it's loading each tile, but that isn't really visually pleasing if the user is on a slow network and will therefore look at many dividers stacked on top of each other for a few seconds.

There is a class specifically meant to be used for this placeholder task: the `CircularProgressIndicator`.<sup>[40]</sup> It's not the only progress indicator: there is also a `LinearProgressIndicator`, but it's less common and less flexible.

You can just place its constructor (`CircularProgressIndicator`) anywhere you want to display it (for example, instead of the `Divider` placeholder for the `ComicTile`), but that would make it stretch to fill the space given to it. This is fixed by restraining it to a `Container` with a limited width.

The `builder` for the `FutureBuilder` inside the `ListView.builder` in the `HomeScreen` becomes the following:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
builder: (context, snapshot) {  
  return snapshot.hasData ?  
    ComicTile(comic: snapshot.data) :  
    Container(  
      width: 30,  
      child: CircularProgressIndicator()  
    );  
},
```

# Making Everything Faster by Caching to Local Storage

Our app works, but it is very slow because it downloads everything every time, and that wastes the user's time and data.

To make our app more efficient, we'll have to save the comics to a local cache and retrieve them from there before trying to get them from the Internet. If the needed comic isn't already saved, we'll download it from the Internet.

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PATH\_PROVIDER PACKAGE

Mobile apps can store data in two directories: a temporary cache directory (which is what we'll use for this example) or a permanent Data/Documents directory (which is meant to be used for permanent storage of user data). The difference between those two directories is that the cache directory may be wiped at any time by the operating system or the user; wiping the data directory should be done only after warning the user that they may lose important data.

The [path\\_provider](#) package allows you to get the path where these folders are located in all of the operating systems supported by Flutter, whereas the I/O operations themselves are handled by the built-in [dart:io](#) plugin. Let's start by adding the following to the dependencies in [pubspec.yaml](#):

```
networking/xkcd_app/pubspec.yaml
```

```
path_provider:
```

And import it in our Dart code using this at the top:



```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:path_provider/path_provider.dart';
```

Since they perform I/O operations (which take a considerable amount of time to complete), both `path_provider` and `dart:io` functions return `FutureS`.

## GET DOWN TO IT: IMPLEMENT CACHING

Since we also need to use Dart's built-in `dart:io` plugin to actually perform the I/O operations, we need to add the following at the top of the Dart file:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'dart:io';
```

The code we need to modify is the code that fetches the comics: we need the comic fetching functions to check if the comic is already saved, get it from local storage if it is, and download it and save it if it isn't already saved.

We'll create a file to store the number of the latest comic (which is going to be updated whenever the app is started with a network connection available) and each comic is going to be saved in a separate file.

Let's start with the most significant change: the change to the `fetchComic` methods.

Specifically, the `HomeScreen`'s `fetchComic` method, which, at the moment, looks like this:

```
networking_starting/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async =>
  json.decode(
    await http.read(
      "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"
    )
  )
```

```
,  
);
```

Fat arrow syntax won't work for what we need now: before returning a value we need to get the temporary directory path, check if the comic has already been downloaded and fetch it if it hasn't.

We'll start editing it by reverting to the regular syntax, with braces and return:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async {  
  return json.decode(  
    await http.read(  
      "https://xkcd.com/${latestComic-n}/info.0.json"  
    )  
  );  
}
```

At the start of the function, we'll declare three variables: the directory that will contain the files, the comic number (since we'll use it more than once it's easier to just calculate it once and use it every time) and the File object itself.

The function that returns the directory is `getTemporaryDirectory`, it is asynchronous and returns a `Directory` object, the path string itself is the `Directory.path` member.

Files are managed through the `File` class, which allows us to create files and perform read/write operations on them.

The `File` constructor is very simple: it takes one positional argument, which is the path to the file.

We can perform operations on files using two methods for each operation: we can choose between a synchronous method (like `File.readAsStringSync`) which returns whatever is requested directly (no `Futures` involved), and an asynchronous method

(like `File.readAsString`) which is asynchronous, returns a `Future` and requires `await` or `Future.then` to retrieve the requested data. The advantage of the synchronous method is that we don't need to convert everything to asynchronous methods and we don't need to use `await` all the time, while the advantage of the asynchronous method is that we can just run it and let the rest of the main thread run unaffected if we don't need the result, as would happen when we create files, for example.

### The First Step: Saving the JSON Response

These three things can be done with the following three lines of code:

```
final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
int comicNumber = latestComic-n;
var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${comicNumber}.json");
```

Now we need to check if the file exists and isn't empty and return its decoded content:

```
if(await comicFile.exists() && comicFile.readAsStringSync() != "")
  return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
```

If it isn't, we need to create the file and write the JSON string to it:

```
else {
  final comic =
    await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${latestComic - n}/info.0.json');
```

The entire function, when put together, ends up being:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async {
  final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
  int comicNumber = latestComic-n;
  var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${comicNumber}.json");
  if(await comicFile.exists() && comicFile.readAsStringSync() != "")
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
  else {
    final comic =
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${latestComic - n}/info.0.json');
    /* no need to use sync methods as we
```

```

        don't have to wait for it to finish caching */
        comicFile.writeAsString(comic);
        return json.decode(comic);
    }
}

```

Since the `SelectionPage` should also take advantage of cached comics, we just need to modify this function slightly to take the comic number as a string argument:

```

Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async {
    final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n}.json");

    if(await comicFile.exists() && comicFile.readAsStringSync() != "")
        return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
    else {
        final comic =
            await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${n}/info.0.json');
        comicFile.writeAsString(comic);
        return json.decode(comic);
    }
}

```

## SAVING THE LATEST COMIC NUMBER

In its current state, our app still depends on the latest comic number being fetched at startup to work, but we can save that in a file when we get it and, if at some point we can't fetch it at startup, we will try to get it from the file instead.

We obviously want to fetch the remote one whenever we can, since we want that number to change when new comics come out, unlike what we did in `_fetchComic`, where we fetched from files whenever possible and only resorted to fetching from the Internet if that wasn't possible.

To do this in our app we need to change the `getLatestComicNumber` top-level function, and to achieve what we want there is a feature that will be familiar to most programmers is catching exception using `try` and `catch`.

If the app attempts a network connection and fails (which happens when the site can't be reached by the device for any reason), it will throw an exception.

We can catch that exception and grab the comic number from local storage instead.

We'll start editing the function declaring the directory and file variables, along with a variable to store the latest comic number that will be returned:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();  
var file = File('${dir.path}/latestComicNumber.txt');  
int n = 1;
```

## CATCHING EXCEPTIONS

This section is an anticipation of *Throwing and Catching Exceptions*, since we will deal with `try-catch` block to catch exceptions.

Whenever, in any programming language, a piece of code fails to perform the action that is requested to perform, the programming language allows it to *throw* an *exception*. This will result in a crash of the piece of software in question, but any exception can be handled by *catching* it and performing an action in response to the exception.

For example, if we try to get the comic number and an exception is thrown (meaning that the latest comic number couldn't be fetched, probably because no network connection is available) we can catch that exception and check if we have fetched it in a previous occasion, so that we can retrieve it from there instead.

To do that, we'll start by wrapping whatever could fail in a `try` block, like this:

```
try {  
  // CODE THAT COULD FAIL  
} catch(exceptionDetails) {  
  print("Something failed");  
  print(exceptionDetails);  
}
```

So let's fetch the latest comic number, but in a `try` block:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
try {  
  n = json.decode(  
    await http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')  
  )["num"];  
  
}
```

Since saving the number in a file doesn't affect the rest of the function's execution, we can check if the file exist, create it if it doesn't and write the number to the file in a separate thread, without making the function wait for these operations to be completed (all of this will go inside the `try` block and will only be executed if the previous instruction doesn't fail):

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
file.exists().then(  
  (exists) {  
    if(!exists) file.createSync();  
    file.writeAsString('$n');  
  }  
);
```

The `.then` method creates a new thread, waiting for the function to return a value.

When `file.exists` returns a value, it is passed to an anonymous function that does everything we need it to do without affecting the rest of the function.

If this fails and there is a file from which we can get the number we will get the number from that file, using the `catch` keyword:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
catch(e) {  
  if(  
    file.existsSync() &&  
    file.readAsStringSync() != ""  
  )  
    n = int.parse(file.readAsStringSync());  
}
```

And, regardless of how we get here, we return the number:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
return n;
```

## SAVING THE IMAGES

Now, if you try to open the app with no network connection, you will notice that everything works, but there are no images.

This shouldn't be surprising: we are only saving their URL, and we obviously can't access the images without a network connection.

This means we need to download the images to make our app 100% usable offline and, to be able to do this, we will, once again, have to make changes to `fetchComic`.

The code that runs when the file already exists doesn't need to be changed: it just reads the file and saves it, we just need to ensure that we clear the cache before running the app since we'll be making changes to how the comic's JSON string is being saved and we will be making changes to the functions that use the values in the cached comics.

In the `else` statement's curly braces in the `HomeScreen`'s `fetchComic` method we need to create the file, get the comic's JSON body, save the image to local storage, and replace the URL in the `img` parameter with the saved image's path.

These are all operations that have already been described by this book and, when put together, produce the following `_fetchComic`:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(int n) async {

  final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
  int comicNumber = latestComic-n;
  var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${comicNumber}.json");
  if(
    await comicFile.exists() &&
    comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
  )
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
  else {
    comicFile.createSync();
    final comic = json.decode(
      await http.read(
        'https://xkcd.com/${comicNumber}/info.0.json'
      )
    );
    File('${dir.path}/${comicNumber}.png')
      .writeAsBytesSync(await http.readBytes(comic["img"]));
    comic["img"] = '${dir.path}/${comicNumber}.png';
    comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));

    return comic;
  }
}
```

We are just using an asynchronous function without an `await` expression to write the comic file, since it isn't going to be used by the app until it is restarted, so we don't need to pause the execution to write it like we do, for example, for the image file that is going to be used by the `ComicTile` not long after the



method returns.

The same exact changes apply to the `SelectionPage`'s `_fetchComic` method, given that this part of the function doesn't change between the two:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(String n) async {  
  final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();  
  var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n}.json");  
  
  if(  
    await comicFile.exists() &&  
    comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""  
  )  
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());  
  else {  
    comicFile.createSync();  
    final comic = json.decode(  
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${n}/info.0.json')  
    );  
  
    File('${dir.path}/${n}.png')  
      .writeAsBytesSync(await http.readBytes(comic["img"]));  
    comic["img"] = '${dir.path}/${n}.png';  
    comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));  
  
    return comic;  
  }  
}
```

Since the `comic["img"]` value is now the path to the file that contains the comic image, we need to change (in the build methods for the `ComicPage` and for the `ComicTile`) the following line:

```
Image.network(comic["img"])
```

to:

```
Image.file(File(comic["img"]))
```

At this point opening the app with an active Internet

connection, closing it and opening it again without an Internet connection will reveal that the app is now completely capable of browsing comics that have already been fetched while not being able to perform requests to the XKCD website.

## Allowing the User to Click the Image and Go to the Website: The `url_launcher` Package

What if users want to see a comic on the XKCD website? Right now, the only way they could do that is by taking advantage of the comic number and title and searching the XKCD website themselves.

It wouldn't be too hard to provide users with the ability to do that with a tap in the app, so let's do it!

To launch URLs from Flutter apps, we'll use a handy package on Pub called `url_launcher`.

### USING THE `URL_LAUNCHER` PACKAGE

Let's add the `url_launcher` package to the dependencies in `pubspec.yaml`:

```
networking/xkcd_app/pubspec.yaml
```

```
url_launcher: ^5.0.2
```

and import it in our code in `main.dart`:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:url_launcher/url_launcher.dart';
```

The `url_launcher` package provides two functions: `canLaunch(url)` and `launch(url)`. The first returns a `bool` wrapped in a `Future`, which will be `true` if there is an app that can handle the URL or `false` if there isn't. The second actually launches the URL and returns the same value as the other function: if the launch was

successful, it returns `true`; if it wasn't, it returns `false`.

So we know how to launch the URL, but we don't actually get the comic URL when we fetch the comic's JSON. That's not actually a problem, since the URL for each comic is just `https://xkcd.com/comic_number/`: the URL to reach comic #2019 is `https://xkcd.com/2019/`.

This means that a method to launch comics, to be defined inside the `ComicPage` class, can be written in the following way:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
void _launchComic(int comicNumber) {  
  launch("https://xkcd.com/$comicNumber/");  
}
```

## ADDING AN ONTAP EVENT

We know how to launch an URL, but the `Image`'s constructors don't provide an `onTap` argument, so we need to wrap it in a `InkWell`, which is a lot like wrapping an `img` HTML image tag in an `a` link tag: the `InkWell` needs two arguments: a `child` which, in this case, will be the `Image`, and the `onTap` argument we wanted, along with a bunch of options to customize the inksplash effect you can check out on the official Flutter documentation.  
<sup>[41]</sup>

All that's left to do is to find the place where we show the comic image in `ComicPage` and wrap it in the `InkWell`:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
InkWell(  
  onTap: () {_launchComic(widget.comic["num"]);},  
  child: Image.file(File(widget.comic["img"])),  
),
```

**Showing Inksplash on the InkWell**



One of `InkWell`'s features is that it can show an inksplash effect when the user taps on the area where it is located, but that will not work in our app because of how visual effects like the inksplash are applied on Flutter widgets.

A Flutter layout is made of widgets, but the inksplash is not applied to widgets: it is applied to `Material`, which is the class that is also responsible for clipping and elevation effects. An `Image` is drawn *over* a `Material`, so the inksplash will be applied to the `Material` *below* the image, which will make it invisible.

To show the inksplash effect you'd need to overlap the `Image` with a transparent `Material` widget. The `Ink` widget<sup>[42]</sup> makes that simpler: it provides a `Ink.image` method that allows you to set the `InkWell` as a `child`, making the image and the `Material` on top of it an ancestor of the `InkWell`.

A disadvantage of the `Ink` is that it requires setting a maximum width and height. For an example of code that correctly shows the inksplash over the image and that works when replacing the code we used above, take a look at this:

`networking/xkcd_app/lib/inkSplashComicLaunch.dart`

```
Material(  
  child: Ink.image(  
    image: FileImage(File(widget.comic["img"])),  
    height: 300,  
    width: 200,  
    child: InkWell(  
      onTap: () {_launchComic(widget.comic["num"]);},  
    ),  
  ),  
),  
),
```

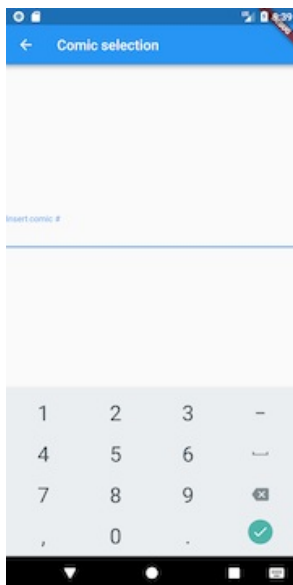
If you are not interested in the inksplash effect at all, you can use a

`GestureDetector` instead of the `InkWell`. It works in the same way as the `InkWell`, with the same arguments, but without applying an inksplash effect on any kind of widget.

## Adding Comic Selection by Number

It's very easy to fetch comics by number, so it seems obvious that we should be able to let the user select comics using the comic number, especially because very often users want to go back to a comic they've seen on the Web.

To do that, we'll start by creating a page to select the comics, which will look like this:



Since it doesn't need any parameters to work, we don't need to specify the constructor, but we need to have a `fetchComic` method that fetches by comic number, unlike the one we used for the `HomePage`:

```
class SelectionPage extends StatelessWidget {  
  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(String n) async =>  
    json.decode(  
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/$n/info.0.json')  
    );  
}
```

The `build` method will be more complex, using some Flutter

features we've never seen before in this book:

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("Comic selection"),
    ),
    body: Center(
      ① child: TextField(
        decoration: InputDecoration(
          labelText: "Insert comic #",
        ),
        ② keyboardType: TextInputType.number,
        ③ autofocus: true,
        onSubmitted: (String a) => Navigator.push(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            ④ builder: (context) => FutureBuilder(
              future: _fetchComic(a),
              builder: (context, snapshot) {
                if(snapshot.hasData) return ComicPage(snapshot.data);
                return CircularProgressIndicator();
              }
            ),
          ),
        ),
      ),
    ),
  );
}
```

- ① This is a `TextField`, which is a widget that allows the user to input text.
- ② `keyboardType` is used to set the type of information the user is supposed to input (the framework will optimize the display and/or the type of keyboard shown to the user to suit this setting). It is of type `TextInputType`, which can be one of the following:

- `TextInputType.text` (default) for regular single-line text.
- `TextInputType.multiline` for multiple lines of text.



- `TextInputType.number`, which is what we're going to use, for numbers.
  - `TextInputType.datetime` for date and time.
  - `TextInputType.emailAddress` for email addresses.
  - `TextInputType.phone` for telephone numbers.
- ③ This argument makes the view automatically focus on the `TextField`. This means the keypad will automatically open and any numbers typed on it will be sent to the `TextField`, without requiring the user to tap on it first.
- ④ We haven't yet fetched the comic, which means we need to call the `FutureBuilder` to fetch the comic and use the comic as an argument for the `ComicPage`.

Now we need to be able to reach that page from the home page. We'll do this by using `AppBar` actions, which are widgets we can show on the right side of the app bar. In this case, we're going to use an `IconButton`:

```

appBar: AppBar(
  title: Text(title),
  ① actions: <Widget>[
    IconButton(
      icon: Icon(Icons.looks_one),
      ② tooltip: "Select Comics by Number",
      ③ onPressed: () =>
        Navigator.push(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (BuildContext context) => SelectionPage()
          ),
        ),
    ],
  ),
),

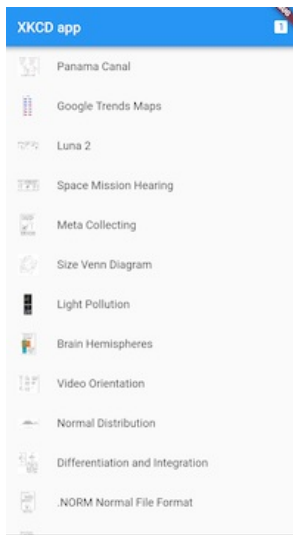
```

- ① This is where we are going to add a `List` of widgets to

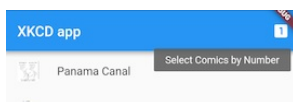
show on the [AppBar](#). In this case it's going to be just one [IconButton](#).

- ② The [IconButton](#) also needs a tooltip to help the user understand what the button does. Further on in the book there is a screenshot of what it looks like.
- ③ This is just like the [ComicTile](#)'s `onpressed`.

The updated home page, showing the overall new look of the app, looks like:



and when the user keeps the button pressed the tooltip will look like:



## WHAT IF THAT COMIC DOESN'T EXIST?

The user could input any number that goes through their head in the [SelectionPage](#). While I don't actively endorse abusing innocent app features this way, the user could choose to input a number that is bigger than the latest comic's number, and we can't just let the app crash or let the [CircularProgressIndicator](#) loop

forever because the user isn't supposed to do that.

We need to handle that situation, and for that we'll use the `AsyncSnapshot`'s `hasError` property: if it is `true`, it means an error occurred during the processing of the `future`. If it is true, we'll show the user an `ErrorPage`, which we'll build later.

Meanwhile, here's the new `builder` for our `FutureBuilder`:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
builder: (context, snapshot) {  
  if(snapshot.hasError) return ErrorPage();  
  if(snapshot.hasData) return ComicPage(snapshot.data);  
  return CircularProgressIndicator();  
}
```

I said we were going to build a `ComicPage` at some point. The moment has come to do that, so let's do it! The `ComicPage` needs to be just a simple `StatelessWidget` and the usual `Scaffold` and `AppBar`. The `body` will be a `Column` containing an icon and a `Text` informing the user they have done something wrong:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
class ErrorPage extends StatelessWidget {  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    return Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: Text("Error Page"),  
      ),  
      body: Column(  
        children: [  
          Icon(Icons.not_interested),  
          Text(  
            "The comics you have selected doesn't exist"+  
            "or isn't available"  
          ),  
        ],  
      ),  
    );  
  }  
}
```

}

### Make Your Own Changes

We have already seen quite a lot of Dart code, but have you been writing your own as well? If you haven't, here is another chance (after the one in *[Wrapping Up the Calculation](#)*) for you to make a very simple and slight improvement to our XKCD app.

The [ErrorPage](#) we just wrote generically informs the user that we couldn't get that comic. This can also be used any time we can't fetch a comic (for example, if there is no Internet available and the cache was wiped).

You can do this yourself very easily by adding a [snapshot.hasError](#) condition to each [FutureBuilder](#). You could go one step further and compare the comic number given to the [SelectionPage](#) to the latest comic number and show a different error if the user accidentally gave a comic number that is bigger than the latest comic number.

## Permanent Data I/O in Flutter: Adding “Starred” Comics

Up until now we have only used the temporary cache directory, but if we want to add a feature that allows the user to save some comics to local storage permanently as a way to keep their favorite comics always available to them. To do that, we need to have access to a permanent local storage facility.

That is available to us in the form of application documents directory, which is where an app is supposed to save data that should be kept until the user consciously deletes it.

We can get the path of the application documents directory using `getApplicationDocumentsDirectory`, and we can use it in the same way we use the cache directory we got through `getTemporaryDirectory`: we use `getApplicationDocumentsDirectory().path` as part of the path we give to the `File`'s constructor.

Let's get to implementing this feature, starting with adding a star-shaped button in the app bar in the home page to access previously saved comics and one in the comic page to save comics.

But even before we do any of that, we need to turn the `ComicPage` into a `StatefulWidget` if we want the view to reflect the change in the comic's state triggered by the user's action. This means we need to do two things: change the definition of the `ComicPage` to be a subclass of `StatefulWidget` and turn what was up until now the `ComicPage` into a `State<ComicPage>` definition, inside which the same `build` method will reside:

---

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
class ComicPage extends StatefulWidget {  
  ComicPage(this.comic);  
  
  final Map<String, dynamic> comic;  
  
  @override  
  _ComicPageState createState() => _ComicPageState();  
}
```

```
class _ComicPageState extends State<ComicPage> {
```

```
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    // return Scaffold(...)  
  }  
}
```

The next step is to decide what kind of file we should use for storing the starred comics. We have used two different kind of files until now:

- A JSON-encoded text file to store the comic data and a simple text file to store the latest comic number.
- A binary file to save the image data.

The choices have been dictated by the nature of the data we needed to save: images are binary data, whereas we get the comics in a textual JSON format, meaning they can easily be saved in that format to local storage. A single number can be stored as binary data or text-based data without too many differences.

The starred comics will be a list of numbers, and there are advantages and disadvantages to each approach:

- Saving in a binary format (using `writeAsBytes`) is simpler to implement and requires less computing overhead, but will generate files that are not readable by the user, but more efficient on storage.
- Saving it in a JSON list makes it possible for the user to read and edit the file directly, but results in a less efficient use of computing power and

storage space.

We are going to use binary format in this case since that seems to be the optimal solution for this problem. We'll start by implementing an `_addToStarred` in the `ComicPageState` to add a comic to the starred comics list:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
void _addToStarred(int num) {  
  var file = File("$docsDir/starred");  
  List<int> savedComics = json.decode(  
    file.readAsStringSync()  
  ).cast<int>();  
  if(isStarred) {  
    savedComics.remove(num);  
  }  
  else {  
    savedComics.add(num);  
  }  
  file.writeAsStringSync(json.encode(savedComics));  
}
```

which depends on the existence of `isStarred` as a `ComicPage` member variable:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
bool isStarred;
```

We need to determine whether or not the comic is starred when we load the `ComicPage` for the first time, since we will be changing that variable's value whenever the user taps on the star button. Since we can't have an `async initState`, we'll use `.then`:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
void initState() {  
  super.initState();  
  getApplicationDocumentsDirectory().then(  
    (dir) {  
      docsDir = dir.path;  
      var file = File("$docsDir/starred");
```

```

    if(!file.existsSync()) {
      file.createSync();
      file.writeAsStringSync("[]");
      isStarred = false;
    }
    else {
      setState(){isStarred = _isStarred(widget.comic["num"]);});
    }
  }
);
}

```

This depends on an `onStarred` method that finds out if the comic have been starred by opening the file containing the starred comic numbers, casting it from a `List` of `dynamic` (which is a data type that can contain anything) to a `List` of integers and checking whether the comic number is contained in the list:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```

bool _isStarred(int num) {
  var file = File("$docsDir/starred");
  List<int> savedComics = json.decode(
    file.readAsStringSync()
  ).cast<int>();
  if(savedComics.indexOf(num) != -1)
    return true;
  else
    return false;
}

```

## ADDING THE APPBAR ACTION TO THE COMIC PATH

Now we need to implement a way to add each comic to the starred. The way we'll do it in this case is by showing a star-shaped icon in the app bar that, when tapped, calls the `_addToStarred` method on the current comic, adding it to the starred comics list. To do that, we'll add yet another `AppBar` action to our app in the `ComicPage`'s `build` method:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```

actions: <Widget>[
  IconButton(

```



```

icon: isStarred == true ?
  Icon(Icons.star) :
  Icon(Icons.star_border),
tooltip: "Star Comic",
onPressed: () {
  _addToStarred(widget.comic["num"]);
  setState(() {
    isStarred = !isStarred;
  });
},
),
],

```

This is what our new ComicPage looks like:



and what its app bar will look like if the current comic has been starred:



## IMPLEMENTING A STARRED COMICS LIST

We need a way for the user to find all of the comics they add to their favorite comics, and we'll be doing that by creating a new widget: a new page in our app that will be just like the [HomeScreen](#), but only showing starred comics.

Let's define yet another widget and a `fetchComic` just like the one in the [SelectionPage](#) (one that fetches by comic number):

```

class StarredPage extends StatelessWidget {

  StarredPage();

  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(String n) async {
    final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n}.json");

    if(
      await comicFile.exists() &&
      comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
    )
      return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
    else {
      comicFile.createSync();
      final comic = json.decode(
        await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${n}/info.0.json')
      );

      File('${dir.path}/${n}.png')
        .writeAsBytesSync(await http.readBytes(comic["img"]));
      comic["img"] = '${dir.path}/${n}.png';
      comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));

      return comic;
    }
  }
}

```

While we're at it, let's also write a method to retrieve all of the saved comics and return a `List` containing all of the data, taking advantage of the `_fetchComic` method we just wrote:

```

Future<List<Map<String, dynamic>>> _retrieveSavedComics() async {
  ❶ Directory docsDir = await getApplicationDocumentsDirectory();
    File file = File("${docsDir.path}/starred");
    List<Map<String, dynamic>> comics = [];

    ❷ if(!file.existsSync()) {
      file.createSync();
      file.writeAsStringSync("[]");
    } else {
      ❸ json.decode(file.readAsStringSync()).forEach(
        (n) async =>
          comics.add(await _fetchComic(n.toString()))
      );
    }
}

```

```

    },
  },
  return comics;
}

```

- ① Here we define the needed variables and fetch the application documents directory and use it to define the file which we will be operating on.
- ② We need to check whether the starred comics file exists; if it doesn't, we just create the file and end up returning an empty list (we'll work with that later when we build the UI for the starred comics page).
- ③ If the file exists, we fetch all of the comics listed in the file and return them.

Now we'll build the UI for the `StarredPage`:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/starredPageUI.dart

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  ① var comics = _retrieveSavedComics();

  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("Browse your Favorite Comics"),
    ),
    body: FutureBuilder(
      future: comics,
      builder: (context, snapshot) =>
        ② snapshot.hasData && snapshot.data.isNotEmpty ?
          ListView.builder(
            itemCount: snapshot.data.length,
            itemBuilder: (context, i) =>
              ComicTile(comic: snapshot.data[i],),
          )
        ③ :
          Column(
            children: [
              Icon(Icons.not_interested),

```

```

        Text("""
        You haven't starred any comics yet.
        Check back after you have found something worthy of being here.
        """),
      ],
    ),
  );
}

```

- ① The `build` method will be called just once, so adding this call anywhere wouldn't change anything, but this is how you're supposed to do it: put the call returning a `Future` anywhere it will be called just once and then use the value returned by that call as the `FutureBuilder` constructor's `future` argument.
- ② We need to check whether there are any starred comics. If there are any, we'll show a `ListView` of `ComicTiles` as we do in the home page.
- ③ If there are no starred comics, we'll just show a notice to the user. We are using multi-line strings as explained in the Dart appendix to this book (*Characters and Strings*).

The entire `StarredPage` code we've seen is combined into the following class definition:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```

class StarredPage extends StatelessWidget {

  StarredPage();

  Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(String n) async {
    final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n.json}");

    if(
      await comicFile.exists() &&

```

```

        comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
    )
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
  else {
    comicFile.createSync();
    final comic = json.decode(
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/$n/info.0.json')
    );

```

```

    File('${dir.path}/$n.png')
      .writeAsBytesSync(await http.readBytes(comic["img"]));
    comic["img"] = '${dir.path}/$n.png';
    comicFile.writeStringSync(json.encode(comic));

    return comic;
  }
}

Future<List<Map<String, dynamic>>> _retrieveSavedComics() async {
  Directory docsDir = await getApplicationDocumentsDirectory();
  File file = File('${docsDir.path}/starred');
  List<Map<String, dynamic>> comics = [];

  if(!file.existsSync()) {
    file.createSync();
    file.writeStringSync("[]");
  } else {
    json.decode(file.readAsStringSync()).forEach(
      (n) async =>
        comics.add(await _fetchComic(n.toString()))
    );
  }
  return comics;
}

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  var comics = _retrieveSavedComics();

  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("Browse your Favorite Comics"),
    ),
    body:
      FutureBuilder(
        future: comics,
        builder: (context, snapshot) =>
          snapshot.hasData && snapshot.data.isNotEmpty ?
            ListView.builder(
              itemCount: snapshot.data.length,

```

```

itemBuilder: (context, i) =>
  ComicTile(comic: snapshot.data[i],),
)
:
Column(
  children: [
    Icon(Icons.not_interested),

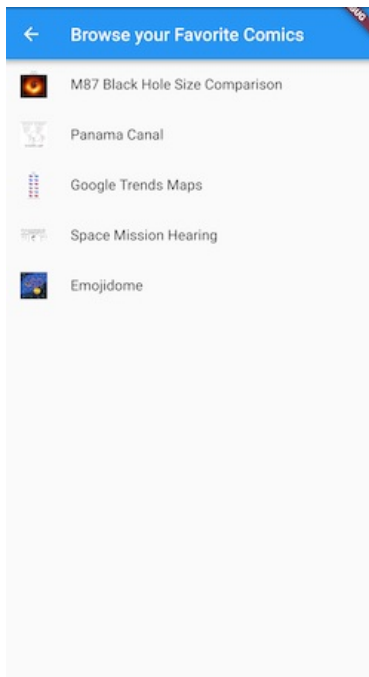
```

```

    Text("""
      You haven't starred any comics yet.
      Check back after you have found something worthy of being here.
    """),
  ]
)
)
);
}
}

```

This is what our starred comics' list will look like:



### Adding a Link to the HomeScreen's App Bar

Now we need the user to be able to reach this page from the rest of the app. We'll make this possible by adding an [AppBar](#) action to the [HomeScreen](#). This will be very similar to previous

app bar actions we added earlier: when the user taps on the icon we show the user the [StarredPage](#) on top of the current view:

```
networking/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
IconButton(  
  icon: Icon(Icons.star),  
  tooltip: "Browse Starred Comics",  
  onPressed: () {  
    Navigator.push(  
      context,  
      MaterialPageRoute(  
        builder: (BuildContext context) =>  
          StarredPage()  
      ),  
    );  
  }  
),
```

This is what the [HomeScreen](#)'s app bar will look like:



## Where We're Going Next

In this chapter we've seen how to interact with the network and local storage by building an XKCD comic browser app. In the next chapter, we're going to explore how to test Flutter apps.

---

### Footnotes

[33] <https://xkcd.com/2050/>

[34] <https://api.dartlang.org/stable/2.1.0/dart-convert/json-constant.html>

[35] <https://api.dartlang.org/stable/2.1.0/dart-convert/JsonCodec-class.html>

[36] <https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/http>

[37] <https://pub.dartlang.org/documentation/http/latest/http/http-library.html>

[38] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_HTTP\\_header\\_fields](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_HTTP_header_fields)

[39] <https://material.io/design/components/navigation-drawer.html>

[40] <https://material.io/design/components/progress-indicators.html#circular-progress-indicators>

[41] <https://docs.flutter.io/flutter/material/InkWell-class.html>

[42] <https://docs.flutter.io/flutter/material/Ink-class.html>



## Chapter 6

# Testing and Debugging Flutter Apps

Up until now we have discussed how a Flutter app is built, with all the different UI, I/O, and state management features the framework offers. That's all very nice when everything goes according to plan and the code does exactly what you think it will do, but that's not always the case and testing can simplify the development process, especially on larger projects, by making sure each piece of code does what it's supposed to.

It's not the only thing we're going to talk about in this chapter: when things go wrong in your app and there's nothing the method you're writing can do about it, exceptions are there to make sure you can notify the rest of your app that something has gone wrong, letting a calling function make a decision about what to do about the issue. This is especially necessary when apps make I/O operations that, as they operate on things outside the control of the user and/or the developer, are bound to fail at some point if the required conditions to execute the operation aren't met.

# Testing

There are multiple kinds of automated tests that can be applied to Flutter apps:

- Unit testing, the most common, which tests a smaller piece of code and should comprise the majority of the testing you should do on an app.
- Integration testing, which tests a big section of integrated pieces of code and, in the case of Flutter, runs the app in an emulator or physical device to check whether it behaves as it should when the user interacts with it in a certain way.
- Widget testing, which tests UI elements without firing up the app on an emulator or device, instead just keeping track of everything that is supposed to be on screen and letting us interact with it in a way that is much simpler and faster than is done in integration tests.

In this section we are going to use as an example the calculator app we built earlier in the book (Chapter 3, *Building a Calculator App* ) and write some tests that make sure each section of the app is working correctly. We are then going to test the XKCD comic browsing app built in the previous chapter to introduce you to mock objects and dependency injection in Flutter.

## DART UNIT TESTING

Unit testing is really simple: you run a piece of code (for example, a class constructor and a few member methods) and check whether the return value is what is expected.

To perform unit testing, we need to add the `test` package to `pubspec.yaml`'s `dev_dependencies`, which is the section where we list dependencies only needed for development and debugging/testing and not needed for the execution of the app

on an user's device.

### Writing Unit Tests for the Calculator App

Let's start by taking a look at the app tree created by `flutter create`: it contains a directory called `test`. That's where we're going to add any tests we want to be performed by Flutter.

Here we'll create a file called `calculation_test.dart`, inside which, as the name says, we are going to test the `Calculation` class which, if you remember (or go back to *Implement the Calculations*), allows us to add little pieces of an expression (as `Strings`) at a time and then get either the result as a `double` number or a `String` representing the expression.

There are multiple tests that can be done: we'll test whether it performs all the different operations and return the right result, then whether it can handle multiple operations and then whether it respects operator precedence. Additionally, we need to check both string values and numeric values returned by it.

We'll start writing the test by importing the needed classes. In this case we'll need to import the `test` package and the `calculator.dart` file in which we have defined the `Calculation` class:

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
import 'package:flutter_test/flutter_test.dart';  
import 'package:calculator/calculator.dart';
```

Then we call the `Calculation` constructor to get an object on which to operate:

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
var calc = Calculation();
```

Everything else will go into the `main` function:

---

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
void main() {
```

```
}
```

The first thing to do is to define a `setUp` function that will get called before each test, creating a brand-new calculation object by calling the constructor in order to make sure each test is run in isolation.

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
setUp() {  
  calc = Calculation();  
};
```

We are going to call the `test` function, which takes a string and a callback function as positional arguments. The string is a text description of the test, so that we know what tests failed (if any fail) and the callback is the code that is going to be run when that test is fired. Inside the callback we'll use the `expect` function to specify what value a certain instruction should return. For example, if we wanted to test a simple addition operation in our `Calculation` we could write the following:

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
test('simple addition', () {  
  calc.add("5");  
  calc.add("+");  
  calc.add("6");  
  calc.add("5");  
  expect(calc.getResult(), 70.0);  
});
```

If we want to test more than one addition/subtraction operation in the same test, we just add the following after it:

```
layout/calculator/test/calculation_test.dart
```

```
test('more sums', () {  
  calc.add("5");
```

```
calc.add("5");
calc.add("-");
calc.add("5");
calc.add("+");
calc.add("50");
expect(calc.getResult(), 100.0);
});
```

We also need to test whether multiplication works, as we do in the following:

layout/calculator/test/calculation\_test.dart

```
test('simple multiplication', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("x");
  calc.add("6");
  expect(calc.getResult(), 30.0);
});
```

Division is also important, and we also get a chance to check whether we can properly return floating-point values with a decimal part:

layout/calculator/test/calculation\_test.dart

```
test('division', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("÷");
  calc.add("2");
  expect(calc.getResult(), 2.5);
});
```

Operator precedence can't be taken for granted, so we need to check whether it is respected:

layout/calculator/test/calculation\_test.dart

```
test('precedence', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("+");
  calc.add("6");
  calc.add("x");
  calc.add("5");
  expect(calc.getResult(), 35.0);
});
```

The last thing to check is whether the `getString` operation works correctly:

layout/calculator/test/calculation\_test.dart

```
test('string', () {  
  calc.add("5");  
  calc.add("x");  
  calc.add("6");  
  calc.add("+");  
  calc.add("7");  
  expect(calc.getString().toString(), "5x6+7");  
});
```

The entire `calculation_test.dart` file adds up to the following:

layout/calculator/test/calculation\_test.dart

```
import 'package:flutter_test/flutter_test.dart';  
import 'package:calculator/calculator.dart';  
  
var calc = Calculation();  
  
void main() {  
  setUp(() {  
    calc = Calculation();  
  });  
  test('simple addition', () {  
    calc.add("5");  
    calc.add("+");  
    calc.add("6");  
    calc.add("5");  
    expect(calc.getResult(), 70.0);  
  });  
  test('more sums', () {  
    calc.add("5");  
    calc.add("5");  
    calc.add("-");  
    calc.add("5");  
    calc.add("+");  
    calc.add("50");  
    expect(calc.getResult(), 100.0);  
  });  
  test('simple multiplication', () {  
    calc.add("5");  
    calc.add("x");  
    calc.add("6");  
    expect(calc.getResult(), 30.0);  
  });  
}
```

```

});
test('division', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("/");
  calc.add("2");
  expect(calc.getResult(), 2.5);
});
test('precedence', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("+");
  calc.add("6");
  calc.add("x");
  calc.add("5");
  expect(calc.getResult(), 35.0);
});
test('string', () {
  calc.add("5");
  calc.add("x");
  calc.add("6");
  calc.add("+");
  calc.add("7");
  expect(calc.getString().toString(), "5x6+7");
});
}

```

### Make Your Own Changes

If you have implemented parentheses in the calculator app, you should consider writing a unit test for that too.

It is very easy to write unit tests: you actually only need to split `calc.add` calls when you want to add an operator, but it's recommended you add numbers one digit at a time at least in some tests since that's how the actual calculator app does it and there might be an issue that only manifests itself when doing it that way (or maybe adding more than one digit at a time would break an implementation that would work in the real calculator, but that's not the case for how we implemented it).

At this point, every time you try to build your app these tests will be run. You can also run the tests using `flutter test` on the command line. However, probably the best way to run tests is by using Visual Studio Code, which shows a *Run* button for each test, allowing you to run each test and get the results shown in an intuitive UI. Android Studio also shows a *right*

arrow button next to the line number to run a test, but I found its UI slightly less intuitive and consistent. You might feel differently, though, especially if you prefer the Android Studio/IntelliJ UI over the Visual Studio UI; opt for whichever you're more comfortable using.

## FLUTTER WIDGET AND INTEGRATION TESTING

Unit testing was simple and straight-forward enough, but widget and integration testing need more attention since they rely on UI, which isn't exactly as dry and simple as the calculation processing code.

Each little piece of low-level logic in our app may be correct, but there might be something wrong in the UI or the combination of some of the pieces of code we already tested. This is why widget testing and integration testing exist. It's to test whether a single widget or a bigger part of the app work correctly.

### Flutter Widget Testing

Flutter provides a way to test whether widgets work correctly and to programmatically interact with widgets in our app.

This might be really hard to imagine if you're not used to similar testing infrastructure, so here's an example of how you might test whether pressing the 5 button will actually make the 5 number appear on the calculator screen after importing `main.dart`:

`layout/calculator/test/widget_test.dart`

```
① testWidgets('5 press test', (WidgetTester tester) async {  
  ②   await tester.pumpWidget(new MyApp());  
  
  ③   expect(find.text('5'), findsOneWidget);  
  
  ④   await tester.tap(find.text('5'));  
  ⑤   await tester.pump();
```



```
⑥ expect(find.text('5'), findsNWidgets(2));  
});
```

- ① The `testWidgets` function is very similar to the `test` function, but with a big difference: it passes a `WidgetTester` object to its callback, and that object is what makes widget testing special.
- ②  *pump means build or render.* `tester.pumpWidget` renders a widget for which we have a definition.

It's important to keep in mind that, even though the `pumpWidget` gives the impression that it allows to pump any kind of widget, if you have a `Scaffold` in your widget it needs to be wrapped in a `MaterialApp` (or the more generic `WidgetsApp` class, which doesn't rely on the Material Design classes) because it needs to have a `MediaQuery` widget in its scope, and such a widget is provided by the aforementioned classes.

- ③ This is the first `expect` call. When we build the app for the first time, just one widget containing the `5` string should exist (the 5 button).

`find` is a constant. We'll look at its use in more detail later in this section.

`find.text` is a `Finder` and `findsOneWidget` is a `flutter_test`-provided `Matcher` constant.

We'll list all `Finders` and `Matchers` in more detail in the next two paragraphs after this code's explanation. All you need to know now is that a `Matcher` is used to judge the results delivered by a `Finder`, which looks for widgets

based on a certain characteristic.

- ④ This is quite self-explanatory: we tap that widget.
- ⑤ When testing, Flutter widgets aren't rebuilt automatically when `setState` is called: to do that, we need to call `tester.pump`, which re-renders the next frame the app is waiting to render.

There is also another method called `tester.pumpAndSettle`, which keeps rendering frames until there is no re-render waiting to happen. This is useful when certain actions trigger an animation that takes several frames to complete.

- ⑥ This is just like the other `find.text` check, but this time there should be two widgets with that text: one is the button, and the other is the screen, which should now show that number.

As you can see, the interface is quite flexible and intuitive, and it is really useful to check whether the UI actually functions correctly.

## All of the Finders

Let's get a bigger picture of Flutter widget testing: there are multiple ways to find widgets using the `find` constant, which is a collection (of class `CommonFinders`<sup>[43]</sup>) of the most commonly used `Finders`:

- `find.text(text)`, which finds `Text` widgets that display a string that is *equal* to its `text` argument.
- `find.byIcon(icon)`, which looks for `Icon` widgets that show an `IconData` (something such as `Icons.not_interested`) equal to its `icon` argument.

- `find.byKey(key)`, which takes us back to *The Key*: it matches the widget that has the `Key` you give it as an argument.
- `find.byElementPredicate(predicate)`, which is very flexible: the `predicate` argument (of type `WidgetPredicate`) is simply a callback that receives a `Widget` as its argument, and returning either `true` or `false` will, respectively, consider the widget being examined as matching or not matching the requirements to be included in the `Finder`'s result, which gives the developer significantly more freedom in deciding matching conditions than the other `Finders`.
- `find.byWidget(widget)`, which is the most specific of the `Finders`: it matches just the `Widget` given as an argument.

There are other, less common `Finder` provided by the `find` constant:

- `find.byTooltip`;
- `find.byElementType`;
- `find.byType`;
- `find.widgetWithIcon`;
- `find.widgetWithText`;
- `find.byDescendant`.

#### Offstage Widgets

All of the `Finders` we have talked about allow you to set a named boolean `skipOffstage` argument which, if set to true, will skip any widgets contained in the rarely used `Offstage` widget, which is a class that allows you to get some widgets (set as the `Offstage`'s `child`) to get laid out and occupy space without actually being shown.

## All of the Matchers

In addition to `findsNothing`, `findsOneWidget`, and `findsNWidgets(n)` there is also `findsWidgets`, which is the opposite of `findsNothing` (equal to `!findsNothing`).

## More Calculator Testing

Let's actually get into a more complete and realistic example of widget testing our calculator app.

### Checking the Grid

The first part of the *5 press test* can actually be turned into something very useful: checking whether all of the grid is actually being rendered and the user has a button for each button. The numbers, the deletion buttons, the . button and all of the operation buttons except the division button contain a `Text` to show their use. This means that we can match them using `find.text`:

layout/calculator/test/widget\_test.dart

```
testWidgets('grid existence test', (WidgetTester tester) async {
  await tester.pumpWidget(new MyApp());

  ❶ expect(find.text('0'), findsNWidgets(2));

  ❷ for(int i = 1; i < 10; i++) {
    expect(find.text('$i'), findsOneWidget);
  }

  ['+', '-', 'x', '<- ', 'C'].forEach(
    (str) => expect(find.text(str), findsOneWidget)
  );

  ❸ );

  ❹ expect(find.byElementPredicate((element) {
    if(!(element.widget is Image))
      return false;
    else if(
      (element.widget as Image).image
      ==
      AssetImage("icons/divide.png")
    )
      return true;
    else return false;
  }), findsOneWidget);

  });
```

- ① There should be two widgets containing the *0* string: the calculator screen at the start and the zero button.
- ② The numbers from 1 to 10 can be found by simply using a `for` loop.
- ③ We haven't used `forEach` much in this book, but it is very useful: it executes the same callback on each member of a `List` or `Iterable`. In this case, it is a good replacement for a `for` loop iterating over the list of symbols or just writing the instruction to look for each symbol separately.
- ④ We can't use `find.text` for images obviously, and `find.byWidget` might come up as a viable alternative. The issue with that, though, is that it doesn't actually work in our case: it looks for an *exact* match, and it wouldn't find our image if we tried since the resulting object usually contains extra arguments that control widget position and other properties that we don't set directly while creating the widget.

That's where `find.byElementPredicate` comes to our rescue: we can judge ourselves whether the widget matches what we want, which means we can focus just on what we need: we need the widget in question to be an image and we want it to be displaying `icons/divide.png` from the assets.

What gets passed to the callback closure is an `Element` (an instance of a widget along with some context on its position in the widget tree, which we don't need for what we're doing right now). We can access the `Widget` that `Element` was spawned from by accessing its `widget` member property, so that's what we're doing when using `element.widget`.

If the widget isn't an instance of an `Image` (that's what `is` is for, it's checking whether the widget is an instance of an `Image` or a subclass), we need to ignore it (return `false` to exclude it from the found widgets). If it is, we need to check whether the `ImageProvider` it's taking the image from is actually the `icons/divide.png` file from the assets.

Please note that accessing assets in unit and widget tests is only available starting from Flutter version *1.5*.

### **Flutter Integration Testing**

Integration testing is a level above widget testing: for mobile apps, it is performed in an emulator and is meant to test whether a big part of app functionality works correctly. The calculator app is really simple and we don't really get much from integration testing when compared with widget testing, whereas one app that requires integration testing is the previous chapter's XKCD comics app.

Before we get to running integration tests on it, we need to figure out how to also run unit tests and widget tests on it without being dependent on a network connection to the XKCD servers being available and without being able to access the filesystem, as is the case during unit and widget testing.

# Testing the XKCD App: Using Mock Objects

Testing the XKCD app presents a challenge: the app relies on external variables: an Internet connection needs to be present and the app needs to be able to connect to the XKCD servers (which need to be up) to work. The issue with that is that we may need to only test a small part of our app (especially during unit testing) without needing to interface with anything else, and we need to mock files since we can't access them anyway. To do this, developers usually resort to building *mock objects*, which are objects that simulate the features provided by the external interface while not requiring that interface.

Building mock objects isn't language or framework specific, but Google has developed a Flutter package that allows developers to simplify the creation of mock objects: the Mockito library.

## THE MOCKITO LIBRARY

The Google-developed *mockito* package on Pub<sup>[44]</sup> allows you to write classes that reproduce a behavior you choose by using the `when` function.

### Writing a Mock Object

As an example, let's write a replacement for the `http` constant we use in the XKCD app to make requests so that we can test the `getLatestNumber` and `fetchComic` methods. It is an object of the class `Client`, so we write an empty class that `extends` (*extends*) `Mock` and `implements` (*Writing a Class That implements an Interface*) `Client`'s members:

```
testing/xkcd_app/test/unit_test.dart
```

```
import 'package:http/http.dart' as http;

class MockHttpClient extends Mock implements http.Client {}
```

Let's define two comics we can return:

testing/xkcd\_app/test/unit\_test.dart

```
const comics = [
  """
  {
    "month": "",
    "num": 1,
    "link": "",
    "year": "",
    "news": "",
    "safe_title": "The First Comic",
    "transcript": "",
    "alt": "first comic alt-text",
    "img": "https://example.com/1.png",
    "title": "The First Comic",
    "day": ""
  }
  """,
  """
  {
    "month": "",
    "num": 2,
    "link": "",
    "year": "",
    "news": "",
    "safe_title": "The Second Comic",
    "transcript": "",
    "alt": "second comic alt-text",
    "img": "https://example.com/2.png",
    "title": "The Second Comic",
    "day": ""
  }
  """,
];
```

At this point we need to think about the calls we make to `http.read`. The first of them is `http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')`, which is supposed to return a `String` containing the comic in a JSON format, so we'll return the second comic:



```
when(mockHttp.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')).thenReturn(
  comics[1]
);
```

The same also needs to apply for `/2/info.0.json`, so we also need the following:

```
when(mockHttp.read('https://xkcd.com/2/info.0.json')).thenReturn(
  comics[1]
);
```

We need to be ready to return comic number 1 since that's going to be fetched at some point and we need to be ready for that:

```
when(mockHttp.read('https://xkcd.com/1/info.0.json')).thenReturn(
  comics[0]
);
```

We also need to worry about when `http.readBytes()` gets called to fetch an image. The issue with that is that it should return an `Uint8List`, which is a list of 8-bit integers (each of them is a byte). To create an `Uint8List` we need first import the `dart:typed_data` library. The simplest way to create an `Uint8List` is by calling the `Uint8.fromList(list)` and passing it a list literal.

After that, we need to worry about what to return. In this case, we don't really care that the data actually represents an image, since we don't need to render it, we just need it to be something we can predict—in this case, the list will be just the comic number:

```
when(mockHttp.readBytes('https://example.com/1.png')).thenReturn(
  Uint8List.fromList([1])
);

when(mockHttp.readBytes('https://example.com/2.png')).thenReturn(
  Uint8List.fromList([2])
);
```

## File Mock Object

We need to also create mock objects for files and images.

In this case, even though we are calling the classes directly in the app, we need to implement file objects to pass to the functions. An example will be given when we see [\*Testing getLatestComicNumber\*](#).

### Using the Mock Object

We need to make changes to the functions that use the objects we created mock objects for so that they can be passed the mock object and use it instead of the real object they currently use.

This means that the `getLatestComicNumber` function you see in the following code needs to instead take the `Client` and custom `File` as a parameter:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
Future<int> getLatestComicNumber() async {  
  final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();  
  var file = File('${dir.path}/latestComicNumber.txt');  
  int n = 1;
```

```
  try {  
    n = json.decode(  
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')  
    )["num"];  
    file.exists().then(  
      (exists) {  
        if(!exists) file.createSync();  
        file.writeAsString('$n');  
      }  
    );  
  }  
}
```

```
catch(e) {  
  if(  
    file.existsSync() &&  
    file.readAsStringSync() != ""  
  )  
    n = int.parse(file.readAsStringSync());  
}
```

```
    return n;
}
```

The updated code should look as follows:

```
testing/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<int> getLatestComicNumber
({http.Client httpClient, File latestComicNFile}) async
{
  if(httpClient == null) {
    httpClient = http.Client();
  }

  if(latestComicNFile == null) {
    final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    latestComicNFile = File('${dir.path}/latestComicNumber.txt');
  }

  int n = 1;

  try {
    n = json.decode(
      await httpClient.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')
    )["num"];
    latestComicNFile.exists().then(
      (exists) {
        if(!exists) latestComicNFile.createSync();
        latestComicNFile.writeAsString('$n');
      }
    );
  }
  catch(e) {
    if(
      latestComicNFile.existsSync() &&
      latestComicNFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
    )
      n = int.parse(latestComicNFile.readAsStringSync());
  }
  return n;
}
```

This method works just like the older one when no additional named arguments are provided (they would be equal to `null`, triggering the fallback `if` clauses), which would happen during normal app use. If they are provided, though, they are used in place of the real file and HTTP client.

Obviously `fetchComic` also needs to change. Let's start with the `SelectionPage`'s, which was the following in the original app:

networking/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> _fetchComic(String n) async {
  final dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
  var comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n}.json");

  if(
    await comicFile.exists() &&
    comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
  )
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
  else {
    comicFile.createSync();
    final comic = json.decode(
      await http.read('https://xkcd.com/${n}/info.0.json')
    );

    File('${dir.path}/${n}.png')
      .writeAsBytesSync(await http.readBytes(comic["img"]));
    comic["img"] = '${dir.path}/${n}.png';
    comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));

    return comic;
  }
}
```

and needs to become the following to allow for testing by using the clients and files given as arguments if they are given and reverting back to the default when they aren't (in normal app usage) just like we did for `getLatestComicNumber`:

testing/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic
(
  String n,
  {
    http.Client httpClient,
    File comicFile,
    File imageFile,
    String imagePath
  }
) async {
  ,
```

```

Directory dir;
if(httpClient == null) {
    httpClient = http.Client();
}

if(comicFile == null) {
    dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    comicFile = File("${dir.path}/${n.json}");
}

if(imageFile == null) {
    if(dir == null) dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    imagePath = '${dir.path}/${n.png}';
    imageFile = File(imagePath);
}

if(
    await comicFile.exists() &&
    comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
)
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
else {
    comicFile.createSync();
    final comic = json.decode(
        await httpClient.read(
            'https://xkcd.com/${n}/info.0.json'
        )
    );
    imageFile.writeAsBytesSync(
        await httpClient.readBytes(comic["img"])
    );
    comic["img"] = imagePath;
    comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));

    return comic;
}
}

```

The `StarredPage`'s `_fetchComic` is the same as the `SelectionPage`'s, so the same changes apply to it.

The `HomeScreen`'s `_fetchComic` needs similar changes (it's just like the other, but this time we first worry about finding out the comic number by subtracting the `n` argument to the latest comic number):

```

Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic
(
  int n,
  {
    http.Client httpClient,
    File comicFile,
    File imageFile,
    String imagePath
  }
) async
{
  int comicNumber = latestComic-n;
  Directory dir;
  if(httpClient == null) {
    httpClient = http.Client();
  }
  if(comicFile == null) {
    dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    comicFile = File("${dir.path}/$comicNumber.json");
  }
  if(imageFile == null) {
    if(dir == null) dir = await getTemporaryDirectory();
    imagePath = '$dir.path/$comicNumber.png';
    imageFile = File(imagePath);
  }

  if(
    await comicFile.exists() &&
    comicFile.readAsStringSync() != ""
  )
    return json.decode(comicFile.readAsStringSync());
  else {
    comicFile.createSync();
    final comic = json.decode(
      await httpClient.read(
        'https://xkcd.com/$comicNumber/info.0.json'
      )
    );

    imageFile.writeAsBytesSync(
      await httpClient.readBytes(comic["img"])
    );
    comic["img"] = imagePath;
    comicFile.writeAsString(json.encode(comic));

    return comic;
  }
}

```

By making the additional arguments that allow us to provide mock objects optional we can call those methods inside the app without being forced to pass the extra arguments and we keep the function as close to the original as possible while allowing for the usage of mock objects.

## WRITING THE TESTS

We have made the necessary changes and now we need to write the tests for the XKCD app.

### XKCD APP UNIT TESTS

We need to test whether the app correctly fetches the latest comic number which, in this case, is 2. We also need to test whether both `_fetchComic` method run as expected.

Let's start by adding the mock classes we defined earlier and importing everything we need

The last thing we need outside `main` is the list of comic data strings, while all of the calls to `when` go inside the `main` function definition.

#### Testing `getLatestComicNumber`

Let's start by writing a test for `getLatestComicNumber`: for it we'll need to define the mock objects for the latest comic number file and for the http client.

We need to define behavior for both asynchronous and synchronous calls, since we need the test to work with a different implementation too:

```
testing/xkcd_app/test/unit_test.dart
```

```
test("get latest comic number test", () async {  
  ① var latestComicNumberFile = MyFile();
```

```
var latestComicNumberExists = false;  
String latestComicNumberString;  
var mockHttp = MockHttpClient();
```

- ② 

```
when(mockHttp.read('https://xkcd.com/info.0.json')).thenAnswer(  
    (_) => Future.value(comics[1])  
);
```
- ③ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.createSync()).thenAnswer(  
    (_) {  
        latestComicNumberExists = true;  
    }  
);
```
- ④ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.create()).thenAnswer(  
    (_) {  
        latestComicNumberExists = true;  
        return Future.value(latestComicNumberFile);  
    }  
);
```
- ⑤ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.writeAsStringSync("2")).thenAnswer(  
    (_) {  
        latestComicNumberExists = true;  
        latestComicNumberString = "2";  
    }  
);
```
- ⑥ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.writeAsString("2")).thenAnswer(  
    (_) {  
        latestComicNumberExists = true;  
        latestComicNumberString = "2";  
        return Future.value(latestComicNumberFile);  
    }  
);
```
- ⑦ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.existsSync()).thenReturn(  
    latestComicNumberExists  
);
```
- ⑧ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.exists()).thenAnswer(  
    (_) =>  
        Future.value(latestComicNumberExists)  
);
```
- ⑨ 

```
when(latestComicNumberFile.readAsStringSync()).thenAnswer(  
    (_) {
```



```

    // if we try to read from a file that doesn't exist we've made a mistake
    assert(latestComicNumberExists, true);
    return "2";
  }
);

⑩ when(latestComicNumberFile.readAsString()).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    assert(latestComicNumberExists, true);
    return Future.value(latestComicNumberString);
  }
);

⑪ expect(
  await getLatestComicNumber(
    httpClient: mockHttp,
    latestComicNFile: latestComicNumberFile,
  ),
  2
);
});

```

- ① This is where we declare the mock objects and some data they operate on: a mock `File` that uses a `bool` to keep track of whether it has been created and a `String` to simulate the storage of a string. We also declare a mock HTTP client.
- ② This is the first of our `when` calls and it's the only one for the mock HTTP client: it returns our fake latest comic when we try to access it.
- ③ Now we need to define the `latestComicNumberFile`'s behavior: we'll start with the synchronous method to create the file, which will change the `latestComicNumberExists` boolean to true. This is going to be important when we try to read from the file or run the `exists` or `existsSync` methods.

In the parentheses we used `_`, which is meant to be used for unused arguments (it may be used in `catch` blocks as

well). If we had chosen to use that argument and give it a name instead, it would be an [Invocation](#).

An invocation has a few properties that are interesting to us:

- [namedArguments](#), which is a [Map](#) of the named arguments supplied by the caller;
- [positionalArguments](#), which is a [List](#) of the positional arguments supplied by the caller.

- ④ We are doing the same thing for the asynchronous method to create files, which is supposed to return the file (in a [Future](#), since it is an [async](#) method).
- ⑤ At some point [getLatestComicNumber](#) is supposed to try to write the number 2 to a file. We'll simulate writing it by storing it in [latestComicNumberString](#). We also simulate creating the file at the same time, just like what the real methods to write to files do.
- ⑥ This is just like the previous one, but asynchronous. We return the file for the same reason we return it in [create](#).
- ⑦ [getLatestComicNumber](#) checks whether the file exists at some point, so we need to be able to implement that method too.
- ⑧ Having mock objects that implement methods that may be used in the method we're trying to test even if they aren't used allows the mock object to be used without change for more tests and it makes it so we don't have to change the test if at some point we change the functions used in the method we're testing. In this case, we implement both asynchronous and synchronous methods

even when we only use one of them.

- ⑨ This simulates reading from a file. We have an assertion that interrupts execution if we try to read from a file we haven't yet created (either by running `create` or by writing to it).
- ⑩ The asynchronous version of the previous method.
- ⑪ Finally we get to `expect`, passing the mock HTTP client and file and expecting it to return 2.

### Testing Fetching the Latest Comic

The `fetchComic` method has an important feature: it isn't actually defined as `fetchComic` but, instead, it's called `_fetchComic`, which makes it private: it's only accessible within the class itself. It's good practice to define all class members as private if they aren't supposed to be accessed from outside the class, but we need to call it directly to perform unit tests on it. This means we need to change its definition from:

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic
(
  String n,
  {
    http.Client httpClient,
    File comicFile,
    File imageFile,
    String imagePath
  }
) async
{
```

to:

testing/xkcd\_app/lib/main.dart

```
Future<Map<String, dynamic>> fetchComic
(
  String n,
  {
```

```

    http.Client httpClient,
    File comicFile,
    File imageFile,
    String imagePath
  }
) async
{

```

This also means that we need to change any call to `_fetchComic` to calls to `fetchComic`. In this case, it is just one and it is set as the `future` argument of the `FutureBuilder` in the `build` method.

Given that we also need to test the `SelectionPage`'s and the `HomeScreen`'s `fetchComic`, the same changes need to be made to those classes. The `StarredPage`'s `fetchComic` is called only inside `_retrieveSavedComics` and the `HomeScreen`'s is set as the `future` of a `FutureBuilder` inside the `build` method.

## Testing fetchComic

This is the code to test the `SelectionPage` `fetchComic`'s ability to fetch comic number 2:

testing/xkcd\_app/test/unit\_test.dart

```

test("SelectionPage fetchComic latest", () async {
  var latestComicFile = MyFile();
  var latestComicExists = false;
  String latestComicString;
  var latestImageFile = MyFile();
  Uint8List latestImageData;
  var latestImageExists = false;
  var mockHttp = MockHttpClient();

  when(mockHttp.read('https://xkcd.com/2/info.0.json')).thenAnswer(
    (_) => Future.value(comics[1])
  );

  when(mockHttp.readBytes('https://example.com/2.png')).thenAnswer(
    (_) => Future.value(Uint8List.fromList([2]))
  );

```

```

when(latestComicFile.createSync()).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    latestComicExists = true;
  }
);

when(latestComicFile.create()).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    latestComicExists = true;
    return Future.value(latestComicFile);
  }
);

when(latestComicFile.writeAsStringSync(comics[1])).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    latestComicExists = true;
    latestComicString = comics[1];
  }
);

when(latestComicFile.writeAsString(comics[1])).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    latestComicExists = true;
    latestComicString = comics[1];
    return Future.value(latestComicFile);
  }
);

when(latestComicFile.existsSync()).thenReturn(
  latestComicExists
);

when(latestComicFile.exists()).thenAnswer(
  (_) =>
    Future.value(latestComicExists)
);

when(latestComicFile.readAsStringSync()).thenAnswer(
  (_) {
    /*
     * if we try to read from a file that doesn't
     * exist it's because we've made a mistake
     */
    assert(latestComicExists, true);
    return latestComicString;
  }
);

when(latestImageFile.readAsBytes()).thenAnswer(
  (_) {

```

```

        assert(latestImageExists, true);
        return Future.value(latestImageData);
    }
);

when(
    latestImageFile.writeAsBytesSync(
        Uint8List.fromList([1])
    )
).thenAnswer(
    (_) {
        latestImageExists = true;
        latestImageData = Uint8List.fromList([1]);
    }
);

when(latestComicFile.writeAsString(comics[1])).thenAnswer(
    (_) {
        latestImageExists = true;
        latestImageData = Uint8List.fromList([1]);
        return Future.value(latestImageFile);
    }
);

var selPage = SelectionPage();

expect(
    await selPage.fetchComic(
        "2",
        httpClient: mockHttp,
        comicFile: File("latestComicFole"),
        imageFile: File("latestComicFile"),
        imagePath: "https://example.com/2.png"
    ),
    json.decode(comics[1])
);
});

```

It's nothing new: we use Mockito to define expected behavior for all functions that may be called by the `fetchComic` method to fetch the comic: reading and writing from image and comic files and performing HTTP requests.

Defining new tests for other `fetchComic` methods only requires changes for the `HomeScreen`: it needs an integer for the comic number, which is a number that starts from 0 and can be, at

most, 1 less than the latest comic number.

## Grouping Together Tests

Multiple tests can be grouped together using the `group` method, which works exactly like `test`:

```
group("group name", () {  
  test("first test in group", () {  
    // First test in group  
  });  
  test("second test in group", () {  
    // Second test in group  
  });  
  // any other tests you want to add  
});
```

For example, we can group all tests that involve `fetchComic` methods, or maybe we can group together all tests that fetch a specific comic if you decide to structure tests differently. Inside `groups` we can, for example, define variables and mock objects that are needed for more than one test, so that they are accessible by all tests in a group but not outside of the group, but you need to keep in mind that the `group`'s callback closure can't be `async`.

### More Unit Tests: Comic Starring

Testing comic starring in the `StarredPage` doesn't introduce particularly challenging situations, except for the fact that the `retrieveSavedComics` method calls `fetchComic`, which means that the mock objects need to be passed first to `retrieveSavedComics` which will, in turn, pass it to `fetchComic`.

The overall structure of the test should be the following: the `addToStarred` method (in the `ComicPage`) should be called on the same file that will then be used by `retrieveStarredComics` to get the starred comics list. The main difference between this test and the `fetchComic` test is that this one needs two mock text files: one of them needs to contain the comic file, whereas the other one will store the list of saved comics numbers, so it needs to predict the data it will be asked to store, just like we did earlier for the comic and latest number files.

Writing these tests as someone who is trying to understand Flutter will also help you understand the inner workings of our app in more detail and test

your own understanding of it. If you can't write a test for it, you probably don't understand how it's working and that means you need to try to first understand how the app works.

## A FEW WORDS ON WIDGET TESTING MORE COMPLICATED APPS

We have already covered widget testing in the section about testing the calculator, so we won't have examples of widget tests for the XKCD apps, which would be redundant.

Widget testing the XKCD app involves testing whether or not the UI actually works, so we don't actually need to be necessarily design mock objects that perfectly emulate the behavior of the network or file system: we just need to know the UI we need exists and is correctly interacting with our app's backbone.

Widget tests rely on mock objects to work, so reducing the scope of these tests to just testing whether the widgets call the functions they are supposed to call is all that should be done in widget tests: doing anything more than that will only make the tests more complicated and make the integration tests partially redundant.

### Verifying Whether a Method Has Been Called: Mockito's `verify`

Mockito includes a function to verify whether or not a method has been called, making it possible to reduce the scope of tests to only verifying whether methods get called instead of necessarily checking whether a given method returns a given value. For example, if you want the test to fail if `myObj.runMethod()` hasn't been called, you'd add:

```
verify(myObj.runMethod());
```

If you replaced `verify` with `verifyNever` you'd have the opposite effect.



You can also specify the amount of times a method should get called:

```
verify(myObj.runMethod()).called(5);
```

requires the method to have been called 5 times and:

```
verify(myObj.runMethod()).called(greaterThan(4));
```

requires it to have been called *at least* 5 times.

Calling `verify(myObj.runMethod()).called(0)` will fail. You have to use `verifyNever(myObj.runMethod())` for that.

## XKCD APP INTEGRATION TEST

Integration tests are just like widget tests, but they are run on a real device or emulator by using the `flutter_driver` package.

### Modifying the App: Using a TextEditingController

Integration testing requires us to make modifications to the app. One of the main modifications is the addition of keys to any widgets we want to be interacting with, especially if they don't contain text or we need to check the text they contain.

## Meeting an Old Friend Again: The Need for a Key

That is because widget testing and integration testing `Finders` are very similar, but not the same: integration testing uses `SerializableFinders`, which are a lot fewer, and only allow us the following operations:

- `find.byValueKey(value)`, which finds object with `Keys` or `ValueKeys` attached to them that are generated using that `value`.
- `find.text(text)`, which finds `Text` widgets containing the given `text`.
- `find.byType(type)`, which finds widgets of the given `type`.
- `find.byTooltip(tooltip)`, which finds widget showing the given `tooltip`


when long-pressed.

- [find.pageBack](#), which finds the button to go to the previous page.

This means the best way to find widgets with features that don't conform to any of the others, we have to equip the widget with a key and use [find.byValueKey](#) to find it.

The reason why they are so few is because integration tests shouldn't have access to the app's resources or the Flutter UI framework's widgets and classes in general.

## Adding a Button to Submit the TextField's Input

Additionally, we need to make a change to the [SelectionPage](#): at the moment the user can only submit using the number using the submit button on the on-screen keyboard or the  key on a physical keyboard. This is, unfortunately, not supported by Flutter's integration testing infrastructure (at the time of writing), which means we have to create a [TextEditingController](#) and a separate [FlatButton](#) to submit the [TextField](#)'s contents.

## Defining a TextEditingController

A [TextEditingController](#) is a class that stores the data inserted in a [TextField](#) or a similar widget and makes it possible to access that data from outside the [onSubmitted](#) callback we give to the [TextField](#) itself, allowing us to create a button that opens the comic the user asked for, and giving us something to tap to do that when performing integration tests.

Let's declare a [TextEditingController](#) as a private member variable of the [SelectionPage](#):

```
testing/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
final TextEditingController _controller = TextEditingController();
```

## Using the TextEditingController

Let's pass it as the `controller` argument to the `TextField`:

```
testing/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
TextField(  
  controller: _controller,  
  decoration: InputDecoration(  
    labelText: "Insert comic #",  
  ),  
),
```

## Adding the FlatButton

We now need to turn the `Center` widget in the `body` of the `Scaffold` into a `Column`, which will also require changing the `child` argument to `children`, which needs to be a `List` literal (we need to enclose the `TextField` definition in square brackets, in which we'll also add the `FlatButton`).

The `FlatButton` we're going to add needs a `key` to be used in integration testing, and it needs to perform the same actions performed by the `TextField`'s `onSubmit`, but by taking the number of the comic requested by the user from `_controller.text`. The entire `body` of the `Scaffold` ends up being the following:

```
testing/xkcd_app/lib/main.dart
```

```
body: Column(  
  mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,  
  children: [  
    TextField(  
      controller: _controller,  
      decoration: InputDecoration(  
        labelText: "Insert comic #",  
      ),  
      keyboardType: TextInputType.number,  
      autofocus: true,  
      onSubmitted: (String a) => Navigator.push(  
        context,
```

```
MaterialPageRoute(
  builder: (context) => FutureBuilder(
    future: fetchComic(a),
```

```
builder: (context, snapshot) {  
    if(snapshot.hasError)  
        return ErrorPage();  
    if(snapshot.hasData)  
        return ComicPage(snapshot.data);  
    return CircularProgressIndicator();  
}  
,  
,  
,  
key: Key("insert comic")  
,  
FlatButton(  
    key: Key("submit comic"),  
    child: Text("Open".toUpperCase()),  
    onPressed: () => Navigator.push(  
        context,  
        MaterialPageRoute(  
            builder: (context) => FutureBuilder(  
                future: fetchComic(_controller.text),  
                builder: (context, snapshot) {  
                    if(snapshot.hasError)  
                        return ErrorPage();  
                    if(snapshot.hasData)  
                        return ComicPage(snapshot.data);  
                    return CircularProgressIndicator();  
                }  
            ),  
        ),  
    ),  
),  
],  
),
```

## Using the flutter\_driver to Test the Selection Page

Integration testing requires a package called `flutter_driver`. The entire `pubspec.yaml` file containing all of the dependencies required to test Flutter apps (along with the other dependencies we need to run the XKCD app) is the following:

testing/xkcd\_app/pubspec.yaml

```
name: xkcd_app
description: An app to display XKCD comics.
```

```
dependencies:
  http: "^0.12.0+1"
  path_provider:
  url_launcher: ^5.0.2
  flutter:
    sdk: flutter
```

```
dev_dependencies:
  flutter_driver:
    sdk: flutter
  mockito:
  test:

flutter:
  uses-material-design: true
```

To use it, let's create a new directory in the root of our app's source tree called `test_driver`. Inside it, we need to create a file that will run the app with the Flutter driver extensions enabled, and another that will connect to that running app and perform some tests on it.

As an example, we're going to explore how we can interact with the `SelectionPage` and see what it's possible to do with the Flutter integration testing framework.

## Creating a `selectionpage.dart` File

Let's start by creating a file that enables the Flutter driver extensions:

```
testing/xkcd_app/test_driver/selectionpage.dart
```

```
① import 'package:flutter_driver/driver_extension.dart';
import 'package:xkcd_app/main.dart' as app;
import 'package:flutter/material.dart';

void main() {
②   enableFlutterDriverExtension();

③   runApp(
    MaterialApp(
      home: app.SelectionPage(),
```

```
    nome: app.SelectionPage(),  
  )  
);  
}
```

- ① *package:flutter\_driver/driver\_extension.dart* is the part of *flutter\_driver* that allows us to enable *driver extensions*, which need to be enabled when running an app we want to run integration tests on.

We also need to import the app's [main.dart](#) because we need to be able to run the app and we need to import Flutter's Material Design library because we only want to run the [SelectionPage](#) in this case so we need access to [runApp](#) and the [MaterialApp](#) class.

- ② [enableFlutterDriverExtension](#) actually enables the driver extensions. This function is contained in *package:flutter\_driver/driver\_extension.dart*.
- ③ We want to test the selection page, so we run it just like we run regular app home screens when we build Flutter apps, but selecting the [SelectionPage](#) instead.

This is the only file that will have access to your app or to Flutter's UI classes at all. The actual test file mustn't import any of that.

## Creating a `selectionpage_test.dart` File

This file name needs to be the same as the previous one, but with `_test` added to the name before the `.dart` extension. In this case, it has to be called [selectionpage\\_test.dart](#).

This test will be very simple and will simply try to open a comic and check whether it is correctly opened by the app:

```

① import 'package:flutter_driver/flutter_driver.dart';
import 'package:test/test.dart';

void main() {
  group('Selection Page', () {
    ② FlutterDriver driver;
    SerializableFinder appBarText = find.byValueKey("AppBar text");

    ③ setUpAll() async {
      driver = await FlutterDriver.connect();
    });

    ④ tearDownAll() async {
      if (driver != null) {
        driver.close();
      }
    });

    ⑤ test('Verify Page is Loaded', () async {
      await driver.waitFor(appBarText);
      expect(await driver.getText(appBarText), "Comic selection");
    });

    ⑥ test('Open Comic', () async {
      await driver.tap(find.byValueKey("insert comic"));
      await driver.enterText("1");
      await driver.tap(find.byValueKey("submit comic"));
      await driver.waitFor(find.text("#1"));
      expect(await driver.getText(appBarText), "#1");
    });
  });
}

```

- ① Here we need to import the main `flutter_driver.dart` file, along with the regular test package.
- ② Let's define some of the variables we are going to use more than once: the `FlutterDriver` we're going to use to interact with the running Flutter app, and the `SerializableFinder` looking for a `Key` created with the string `AppBar text`, that you should add to every `AppBar Text` widget in the app.

- ③ This section is used to connect to the running app when starting the test.
- ④ Here we disconnect from the app when testing is over.
- ⑤ This first test is very simple: we wait for the page to load and then we check that the `AppBar` text is correct (so that we know that the app has loaded the right page).
- ⑥ This test is more important: we find the `TextField` to insert the comic, we tap it (to select it, just in case), we enter the text `1`, we press the newly created `submit` button, wait for the comic page to load, and check that comic number 1 has actually been loaded (the `AppBar Text` should be `#1`).

To start the test, run the following command with an emulator or device connected:

```
flutter drive --target=test_driver/selectionpage.dart
```

and you'll see the app open and do everything you asked it to do automatically. In the command line, you'll get the confirmation that all tests have passed.

## TESTING MORE

In our integration testing example, we are only testing the `SelectionPage`. That's because it allows us to combine many interesting `flutter_driver` features and it doesn't require repeating the same instructions many times, which would not be very interesting for an example that aims to help you learn new things.

We haven't done integration testing on the calculator app, but it may be used to test executing calculation using the keypad,



testing both the [Calculation](#) and the UI, and that is simply a combination of tests we have already done: it is useful on a real app, but you already know how to do that. That's what integration testing is for, just like the test we wrote for our XKCD app: it tests both the UI and the logic.

Testing the codebase is essential and should be done as much as possible. When writing your own apps, it's important you design and write all three kinds of tests for every aspect of the app: our XKCD app needs tests for the [HomeScreen](#), for the [ComicPage](#), perhaps testing whether the [ErrorPage](#) is shown when it's needed. Additionally, more unit tests and widget tests for the basic UI elements are useful (for example, testing the [AppBar](#) controls on the [HomeScreen](#)).

Code examples of those test cases look a lot like the previous ones, and thus I have not reproduced them here; however, you need to keep in mind the importance of testing.

## **WHEN WE HAVE TO MOCK AND WHEN WE DON'T**

Testing using mock objects can be repetitive and feels like an useless exercise in pedantry and correctness, often begging the question: *is this really necessary?*

Testing software looks like an easy task when no mocking is involved: we just run a method and check whether it returns the correct value, or we simulate user interaction and check whether the app behaves correctly: it's simple, intuitive, and doesn't involve writing too many lines of code for simple things.

Writing mock objects isn't as simple and straight-forward: we need to consider every single interaction of the app with the outside world and simulate the response of the outside world: it is, in many respects, a chore and it seems to detract from

time that could be spent developing a new feature, without actually achieving anything new.

The problem with mocking is that it's not just about protecting from unpredictable outside variables: it is about making the tests actually work. Even though the test will actually work correctly if we don't mock the HTTP client (even though we won't really be able to test the app's functionality based on its result), any attempt to call the functions provided by [path\\_provider](#) to access the paths where to store app files will result in exceptions being thrown.

If we want to know whether the [fetchComic](#) method works, we can't just make the part that works with files optional: it's integral to the correct functioning of the app and that means we need to test it. The best way to test it in tests not run inside an emulator is by mocking files, so that's what we do.

This use case, as we've seen, may be made easier by just using real files on the physical machine that runs the tests: just running the [File](#) constructor will create a file on the machine you're using to run the tests, and that's a way to make testing easier, but not really too predictable or controlled, since it relies on the local machine's file system, which may be inaccessible in case the test is run on a server that doesn't allow the code to have write access to the file system.

Also, an important feature that absolutely requires mock objects even in integration tests is authentication: an app that requires authentication to work makes testing impossible unless tests takes advantage of mocking to overcome the issue of authenticating.

### **Mockito Versus Do-It-Yourself Mock Objects**

Mockito doesn't always make it easier to create mock objects:

on the contrary, sometimes you might find it easier to just write a class that implements the methods you need. You can make them work by defining those classes as subclasses (*extends*) or as classes that implement (*Writing a Class That implements an Interface*) the interface you want to mock.

# Throwing and Catching Exceptions

We already used exceptions in some of the previous chapters, but we'll go through the Flutter implementation in more detail in this section.

Exceptions are used in a piece of code as a way to signal that something's gone wrong, the current function(or *Anonymous Functions and Closures*)'s execution is interrupted and the calling function is supposed to deal with it by catching it.

## THROWING AN EXCEPTION

In Dart exceptions are thrown using the `throw` keyword ( in Python you'd call this raising an exception, in case you never got to see what the world looks like outside of Python). You can create your own exception by creating a class that Writing a Class That implements an Interface the `Exception` class error:

```
class MyOwnPersonalException implements Exception {
  MyOwnPersonalException(this.myOwnPersonalMember);

  String myOwnPersonalMember;
}

double myPersonalDivision(double a, double b) {
  if(b == 0) {
    throw MyOwnPersonalException("Failed to divide a number by 0.");
  }
  return a/b;
}
```

## CATCHING AN EXCEPTION

Whenever we call a function or use an operation that may fail under certain circumstances we're not checking for, we should be catching the exception:

```
void responsibleFunction() {
```

```
int a, b;  
// ...  
b = 0;
```

```
try {  
  int d = myPersonalDivision(a, b);  
  // ...  
}  
catch(exception) {  
  // Deal with the exception  
}  
// ...  
}
```

You can substitute `exception` in `catch`'s parentheses with whatever you want (it is usually just `e`). It contains the name of the exception that was thrown. You can print it to the debug console by using `print(exception)`. Additionally, you can pass a stack trace of the source of the error, which you can also print.

For example, the following:

```
try {  
  int.parse("Flutter");  
} catch(e, stacktrace) {  
  print(e);  
  print(stacktrace);  
}
```

will trigger a `FormatException` and print the following to the debug console:

```
FormatException: Invalid radix-10 number (at character 1)  
Flutter  
^  
#0 int._throwFormatException  
    (dart:core/runtime/lib/integers_patch.dart:131:5)  
#1 int._parseRadix (dart:core/runtime/lib/integers_patch.dart:142:16)  
#2 int._parse (dart:core/runtime/lib/integers_patch.dart:100:12)  
#3 int.parse (dart:core/runtime/lib/integers_patch.dart:63:12)  
#4 main (file:///home/carmine/flutter/example_app/lib/main.dart:21:9)
```

### on SomeException catch()

What if that called function had thrown another kind of exception, which didn't have `myOwnPersonalMember` or maybe you

needed to deal with different exceptions in different ways?  
That's what `on` is for.

For example, let's say we have a function that takes two numbers in a string format, parses them, and performs integer division on them. This means two different kinds exceptions can be thrown during its execution: a `FormatException` if it can't parse the numbers, or a `IntegerDivisionByZeroException` exception if we try to divide by zero.

Dart by default performs floating-point division and returns a `double` number. To perform integer division we need to use the `~/` operator instead of just `/`. This means the function definition will be the following:

```
int jsonDivide(String a, String b) =>  
  int.parse(a)~/int.parse(b);
```

Seen like that, it's no wonder why a function like this is a good example: it is very short but it could throw two different kinds of exceptions: for example, calling it as `jsonDivide("5", "0")` will return an `IntegerDivisionByZeroException`, whereas calling it as `jsonDivide("Flutter", "10")` will return a `FormatException`. Let's pretend we need to tell the user to correct the bad data they entered, so we need to handle each exception differently, which isn't too hard to do in Dart:

```
try {  
  jsonDivide(firstString, secondString);  
}  
on IntegerDivisionByZeroException {  
  // tell the user to not divide by 0  
}  
on FormatException {  
  // tell the user to insert valid numbers  
}
```

So that each of the two `on` blocks will be executed only when the corresponding exception is thrown.

An alternative syntax for `on` blocks is `on ExceptionName catch(e) {}`, which will pass the exception to the block, just like what happens in regular `catch` blocks.

You can, optionally, add a `catch` block after the `on` blocks to handle any exceptions that aren't handled by the `on` blocks.

## FINALLY

When using a regular `try-catch` construct without throwing new exceptions in the process, the execution will continue by executing the instructions placed after the end of the `catch` block, but if you are only using `on` blocks instead of generic `catch` blocks or you're throwing new exceptions inside `catch` blocks, the execution will be interrupted and those instructions won't be executed. If, instead, you want to execute some instructions regardless of anything that happens in the `try` block and in the `catch` and `on` block, you'd use a `finally` block:

```
try {  
    // code that could fail  
}  
on SomeException {  
    // handle SomeExceptin  
}  
finally {  
    // code that will surely be executed  
}
```

## Assert Statements

Somewhere in the middle of the use case of testing and the use case of exceptions you'll find `assert` statements, which are a way for the developer to define conditions that must be met during the app's execution or to have an effective way to test the result of a certain condition.

An `assert` statement can be added anywhere inside an app's code and will terminate the app's execution by throwing an `AssertionError` exception when a condition doesn't return `true`:

```
int a = 3;  
assert(a == 3);
```

These two lines of code will not affect the app's execution and similar syntax is often used in documentation when demonstrating a programming language's features in code examples, including Google's official Dart Language Tour.<sup>[45]</sup>

On the other hand, having code such as this:

```
int a = (6+9/3)/3;  
assert(a != 3);
```

will terminate the app's execution by throwing an exception *while debugging*. Assert statements do *not* have any effect on production code and are only considered while debugging code.

It is possible to include a string to describe the assertion by passing it as the second named argument to `assert`:

```
assert(condition, "The condition wasn't met");
```



## Where We're Going Next

In the next chapter we're going to talk about Firebase and how it can make building a chat app very simple.

---

### Footnotes

[43] [https://docs.flutter.io/flutter/flutter\\_test/CommonFinders-class.html](https://docs.flutter.io/flutter/flutter_test/CommonFinders-class.html)

[44] <https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/mockito>

[45] <https://www.dartlang.org/guides/language/language-tour>

## Chapter 7

# **Build a Chat App Using Firebase**

Google Firebase is a collection of tools to ease the development of some kinds of apps. In this chapter, we are going to build a chat app using it.

## What Is Firebase?

The traditional way to build web and mobile apps is by having a front end and a back end. The front end is what is built using tools like Flutter, platform-specific native SDKs, *React* or *HTML* and it's run on a the users' client device, whereas the back end is ran on a server and is built with tools like *PHP*, *Spring* or *Node.js*.

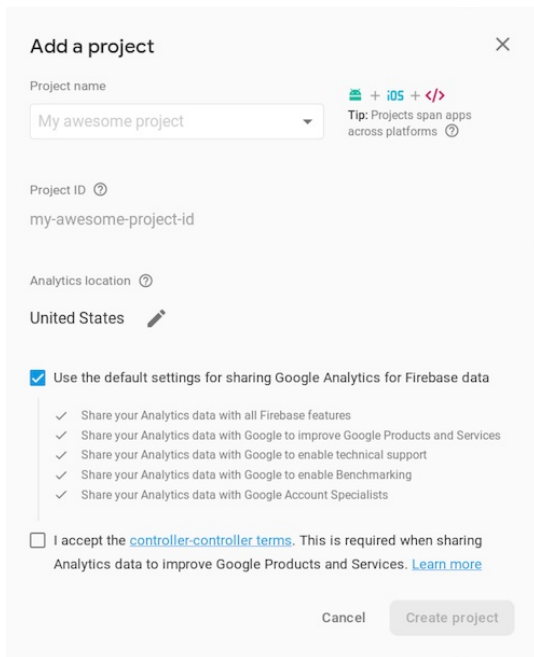
Firebase aims to replace most of the features run on server-side software with their own services that connect directly to apps using Google's own API instead of using standard HTTP requests. Apps built using Firebase are usually simpler to set up and less complicated to maintain. There is a free plan (called *Spark*) that allows a limited number of connections and only offers limited storage and computing, but you don't need anything more to complete the tasks described in this chapter.

### GETTING STARTED

Let's start by navigating to the Firebase Console,<sup>[46]</sup> logging into Google and creating a new project:



after that, you'll get the following popup window:



**Add a project** ✕

Project name  
My awesome project ▼

Tip: Projects span apps across platforms ⓘ

Project ID ⓘ  
my-awesome-project-id

Analytics location ⓘ  
United States ✎

☒ Use the default settings for sharing Google Analytics for Firebase data

- ✓ Share your Analytics data with all Firebase features
- ✓ Share your Analytics data with Google to improve Google Products and Services
- ✓ Share your Analytics data with Google to enable technical support
- ✓ Share your Analytics data with Google to enable Benchmarking
- ✓ Share your Analytics data with Google Account Specialists

☐ I accept the [controller-controller terms](#). This is required when sharing Analytics data to improve Google Products and Services. [Learn more](#)

Cancel Create project

Choose a project name (for this example, we'll use *ChatOnFire* from now on for all project/app names) and the closest servers to your location in the world. Now you need to connect your app to Firebase, and this has to be done separately for the Android and iOS configuration of the app by following the instructions provided on screen, keeping in mind that you can find the platform-specific configuration for each platform the app runs on in the [android](#) and [ios](#) directories of your app tree.

After completing the platform-specific configuration, we need to start connecting Firebase to Flutter, and there are a bunch of Google-developed Flutter packages on Dart Pub that help us build apps using Flutter and Firebase.

## FIREBASE FOR FLUTTER

After installing the *firebase\_core* package<sup>[47]</sup> (you know the drill, there's no need for further explanations, remember to run [flutter packages get](#) after editing [pubspec.yaml](#)) we need to worry about the specific features we need for our app. There is a complete list of Flutter Firebase packages on GitHub's official

Flutter account.<sup>[48]</sup>

Let's start with the most commonly used Firebase tool: the Cloud Firestore database.

## THE FIREBASE CLOUD FIRESTORE

The Firebase Cloud Firestore is ideal for data that is subject to frequent additions and needs to be accessed in real time. This means it is perfectly suited to the creation of a chat app.

For this example, navigate to Database -> Rules in the Firebase Console and change the rules to the following so that we don't need to authenticate (we'll worry about that *Authentication*).:

```
service cloud.firestore {
  match /databases/{database}/documents {
    match /{document=**} {
      allow read, write;
    }
  }
}
```

What is commonly referred to in any SQL DBMS as a table is called a collection in Cloud Firestore. Let's create one. Since we're going to build a chat app, we'll create one to store messages sent by the users.

### Creating a Collection

Since our example is going to be a simple public chatroom, we just need to store three pieces of data about the message:

- Who sent the message, which will be a string that we'll initially set to *Anonymous* for each message, but that will be the user ID of the sender (which is a string) after we implement authentication.
- The message body itself (another string).
- The date and time at which the message was sent, which can be set to the Firestore data type `timestamp`, which is converted to a `DateTime` object in

Dart.

So, let's go to Databases -> Data in the Firebase Console, click the *Add collection* button, which will prompt you to enter a name for the collection. We'll use *Messages* as the collection name. After that, you'll be prompted to enter the data for the first document to be added to the collection.

The Document ID doesn't have to be anything in particular, so you can click the *Auto-ID* button to get it automatically filled for you by random characters; We also need to add all of the fields we mentioned earlier, choosing the appropriate types and setting an appropriate value for each field to be used for the creation of the first message. For our example, let's set the fields in the following way:

- A [string](#) called *from* to identify the sender, with *Anonymous* as the value.
- A [string](#) called *msg*, which will be the body of the message, the value of which we could set simply to *Hi*, as a test.
- A [timestamp](#) called *when*, which you should set to your current time converted to UTC time.

We are using UTC time for the [when](#) field because we want the date and time to be in the user's local time, so we keep the UTC time in the database and convert it to the local time in the app. We'll have to keep this in mind when sending messages from the app because in that occasion we'll have to convert the local time to UTC.

### Interacting with Cloud Firestore in Flutter Apps

To use Firestore in our Flutter app, we'll take advantage of the *cloud\_firestore* package.

Let's start by adding the [cloud\\_firestore](#) package to the dependencies in [pubspec.yaml](#):

```
firebase/chatonfire/pubspec.yaml
```

```
dependencies:  
  flutter:  
    sdk: flutter  
  firebase_core:  
  cloud_firestore:
```

and importing it into `main.dart`:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:cloud_firestore/cloud_firestore.dart';
```

We interact with Cloud Firestore using an instance of the `Firestore` class created using `Firestore.instance`. We can access a collection with `Firestore.instance.collection("collectionName")` where *collectionName* is the name of the collection we want to access. The type of data returned by that is `CollectionReference`, and we will explore how to use that in this section.

## Reading from the Cloud Firestore

If we want to access a certain document directly, we use the:

```
CollectionReference.document(path)
```

simple query method (where) `path` is actually the ID of the document, which corresponds with the path leading to the document within the collection. This returns a `DocumentReference`, and doesn't actually fetch the document. To fetch it, we need to call `DocumentReference.get`, which returns a `Future<DocumentSnapshot>`. After `await`ing or otherwise getting the `DocumentSnapshot` itself, we can access the data contained in the document by accessing the `DocumentSnapshot.data` property, which contains a `Map` of the data contained in the document.

For example, if we had the name of a collection stored in a variable called `collectionName` and we wanted to access document

with ID `docPath`, and in particular its property `"myMember"` and set it to the `data` variable, we would need to write the following:

```
var firestore = Firestore.instance;
var data = (
  await firestore
    .collection(collectionName)
    .document(docPath)
    .get()
).data["myMember"];
```

Querying a single document is useful for some purposes, but what we really want in a chat app when fetching messages is a way to access the list of all of the documents that have been stored in the collection.

To do that, we can use the `CollectionReference.getDocuments` method, which returns all of the documents in the given collection in a `Future`, but its disadvantage is that we need to fetch it again every time we want to update the list of messages, which doesn't really go well with the real-time nature of instant messaging.

What we want is to get the messages as a `Stream` that is changed in real time to yield the list of all messages updated in real time. This is done using the `CollectionReference.snapshots` method, meaning we can use it to get a `Stream` of the messages by writing:

```
Firestore.instance.collection("Messages").snapshots()
```

## Adding Data to the Cloud Firestore

We can add a document to a Firestore collection by using `CollectionReference.add(doc)` where `doc` is a `Map` assigning a value for each of the document's fields, like in the following example, which sends an anonymous message to be stored in the collection:



```
Firestore.instance.collection("Messages").add(  
  {  
    "from": "Anonymous",  
    "when": DateTime.now().toUtc(),  
    "msg": "Hi There From The App",  
  }  
);
```

In a real app we need to authenticate users, so we'll start by discovering how we can authenticate users to our Flutter apps using Firebase Authentication.

## Deleting or Changing Data from the Cloud Firestore

Given a [DocumentReference](#) (the object we get from `Firestore.instance.collection(collection).document(document)`), we can, in addition to getting the data using the `DocumentReference.get` as we said earlier, perform some actions on the document:

- Delete it using `DocumentReference.delete`.
- Change some fields by passing a `Map` to `DocumentReference.updateData`.
- Set the contents of the document, creating it if doesn't exist, by passing a `Map` to `DocumentReference.setData`.

All of these methods run asynchronously but don't return anything.

## AUTHENTICATION

Authentication requires its own *firebase\_auth* package<sup>[49]</sup> and can be configured in Flutter's console by going to Develop -> Authentication -> Sign-in method. In our example we'll authenticate users using their email address and password, which is made very easy by Firebase and is representative of the majority of apps. After selecting it, you'll be warned that more platform-specific setup is required: specifically, we need to add:

```
implementation 'com.google.firebase:firebase-auth:16.2.1'
```

```
implementation 'com.google.firebase:firebase-auth:10.2.1'
```

to the app-level [build.gradle](#) dependencies for Android, and:

```
pod 'Firebase/Auth'
```

to the iOS [Podfile](#) you should have from the CocoaPods configuration that was needed to connect the iOS app to Firebase.

### Using the `firebase_auth` Package

Let's import the `firebase_auth` package, which provides an intuitive Flutter interface to the Firebase Authentication tools:

```
firebase/chatonfire/pubspec.yaml
```

```
firebase_auth: ^0.6.2
```

As always, we need to import the `firebase_auth` package in [main.dart](#):

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:firebase_auth/firebase_auth.dart';
```

## The FirebaseAuth

Firebase authentication is achieved using an instance of the [FirebaseAuth](#) class, obtained using:

```
var auth = FirebaseAuth.instance;
```

After this, we can use the `auth` object to handle most authentication-related actions.

Among them, we find:

```
createUserWithEmailAndPassword(email, password)
```

which creates a user with the given email and password, and:

`signInWithEmailAndPassword(email, password)`

which signs in the user with the given email and password.

### The Many Authentication Methods Available in Flutter

There are many authentication methods available to use with Firebase. Here is a list of the most common ones:

- Phone Authentication, which relies on two phases: running `FirebaseAuth.instance.verifyPhoneNumber`, which takes methods to be run when the code is sent, it's automatically retrieved, or there was an issue during verification. If it is auto-retrieved, we should consider the user authenticated and move on. If it is not, we need to provide the user a way to insert the code they received via SMS and use an `AuthCredential` to log in, as described in the aside *Package and Library Versions* that follows this sidebar.
- Google Sign-In Authentication, using `FirebaseAuth.instance.signInWithGoogle`.

### Package and Library Versions



The *FlutterFire* packages (as Google likes to call the Firebase-related Flutter packages), just like the testing interface, are sometimes incompatible with some versions of Flutter or of the platform-specific API (the one we import in the Gradle/CocoaPods configuration) or don't work at all. Additionally, they tend to have breaking changes from one version to another, meaning the same code has a high change of not working after one or two major releases.

For our example, I used *firebase\_auth* version 0.6.X because that was the only version that consistently worked with the current Flutter version (1.5) and native API version. If, in the future, you need to use a newer version because of security concerns about the older versions

or any other reason. One thing to keep in mind is that the package is slowly switching to using the generic `auth.signInWithCredential` method, which takes as a positional argument a `AuthCredential` object.

An `AuthCredential` object can be generated by calling the `getCredential` of each `AuthProvider`, providing to each the arguments it needs to perform the authentication.

You can look at all of the `AuthProviders` available and the methods you can use to get `AuthCredentials` on the official *firebase\_auth* API reference.<sup>[50]</sup> That's also where you should look in case you upgrade the package version and have issues in general.

## The FirebaseUser

The final result of an authentication process is the generation of a `FirebaseUser` variable, which will also be stored. This represents the user account and stores the following information as properties:

- Its `uid`, a string equivalent to a typical numerical User ID.
- Its `phoneNumber` and/or `email` address.
- An `isEmailVerified` to establish whether a user's email address has been verified, which is useful when doing email and password authentication.
- A `displayName` and `photoUrl` we can set by changing these properties directly.

To make changes to these properties (for example to set the display name), we need to create an `UserUpdateInfo` object, which will have all of these properties. Change any properties you

want to change and then run `user.updateProfile(userUpdateInfo)`, where `userUpdateInfo` is the `UserUpdateInfo` object containing the changed properties.

To change the user's email address, you can use `user.updateEmail(newEmail)`, whereas to change the user's password you can use `user.updatePassword(newPassword)`. You can reload the local profile to match the remote one using `user.reload`. Keep in mind that this will only have an effect if you reassign the `user` variable to `auth.currentUser`.

Firebase's authentication tools can do a lot: other than just creating and deleting accounts, resetting passwords and changing email address, it allows you to also verify email addresses. Verification happens by calling `user.sendEmailVerification`, which sends an email containing a verification link to the user. When the user clicks the link, the email will be considered as verified.

The only difference this makes to Firebase itself is that users with a verified email addresses have the `user.isEmailVerified` boolean property set to `true` instead of `false`. You get to decide what to do with unverified users: whether to supply all features, only some of them, or no features at all.

You also get to decide what the email sent to the user will look like: by going to Authentication -> Templates you can choose the sender name, some aspects of the sender email address and the entire body of the email sent to the user.

## Writing Log-In and Sign-Up Methods

That's the theory, here are two examples of how you can use those methods to write an interface to the Firebase Authentication API for our app.

This is what a sign-up method for email and password authentication could look like:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<FirebaseUser> signUp(  
  String email, String password  
) async =>  
  _auth.createUserWithEmailAndPassword(  
    email: email,  
    password: password  
  );
```

and this is how we could write a log-in method

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<FirebaseUser> logIn(  
  String email, String password  
) async =>  
  _auth.signInWithEmailAndPassword(  
    email: email,  
    password: password  
  );
```

## Checking Whether the User is Logged-In and Getting Information on the Current user

Running:

```
auth.currentUser();
```

will return (asynchronously) the currently logged in [FirebaseUser](#).

If we haven't performed log-in yet, it will return [null](#), meaning there is an easy way to check whether log-in has happened.

## Log-In Persistency in Local Cache

Firebase will preserve login information in local storage, meaning we don't have to worry about persistence of user data on the local user's device since Firebase will take care of that

for us as well.

## Sign Out

Given that the user data is kept by Firebase indefinitely, to sign out a user you need to run:

```
auth.signOut();
```

which is an asynchronous method that doesn't return anything.

## COMBINING AUTHENTICATION AND DATABASE ACCESS

Firebase is great: you just need to authenticate the user and then any operation you try to execute on a Firebase database will be executed on behalf of that user. You don't even need to think about it: Firebase does it on its own and Flutter supports it perfectly. That's what we're going to take advantage of when we build our chat app in *Building the Chat App*.

## Animations and Transitions

There are two ways to animate widgets in Flutter: animating them *within* a given screen and animating them *between* different screens.

### ANIMATING WITHIN A SCREEN: THE ANIMATEDCONTAINER AND SIMILAR WIDGETS

The [AnimatedContainer](#) is one of the simplest widgets to start animating your Flutter app: it's a regular [Container](#) but it animates to when a property is changed, giving a nicer transition to a different state. For example, changing its [height](#) or [width](#) will make the widget shrink or expand gradually, and similar effects can be had by changing the border or color properties of the widget. The duration of the animation can optionally be changed using the [duration](#) argument and its curve (whether or not and how much the animation slows down or speeds up over time) can be changed using the [curve](#) argument.

The [duration](#) is of type `duration`, so you'd use the [Duration](#) we used earlier during authentication, while the [curve](#) is of type [Curve](#). A collection of the most common curves is found in the [Curves](#) class. It is a big collection, so you might consider reading the full list on the official Flutter reference manual<sup>[51]</sup> in the *Constants* section if the following basic curves aren't enough for you or if you want to know the mathematical function that produces each curve:

- [Curves.easeIn](#), which starts out slowly and quickens over time.
- [Curves.easeOut](#), which starts out fast and slows down over time.

If you want to animate just some padding, you can replace a



`Padding` widget with some `AnimatedPadding`, and if you want to animate changes in `TextStyle` you can use the animated version of the `DefaultTextStyle` (which is a class that applies its `style` `TextStyle` arguments to all of the descendants of its `child`), called the `AnimatedDefaultTextStyle` (which animates the change in the `style`) by providing, optionally, a `curve` and a `duration` to these animated widgets.

Those are all interesting, but the most useful is certainly the `AnimatedList`, which animates additions made to a list or deletions of elements of a list.

### **AnimatedList**

The `AnimatedList` starts out as a normal `ListView`, but its state object can be used (via a `GlobalKey`) to insert or delete items, showing a transition when one of these operations is performed.

We can construct an `AnimatedList` just like a `ListView.builder`-constructed `ListView`, but we have to set a `key` that we'll use to interact with it later, which has to be a `GlobalKey<AnimatedListState>`, and the `itemCount` will instead be called `initialItemCount`.

The `itemBuilder` gets an extra `animation` argument, which provides the current state of the animation, which can be used by a `SizeTransition` widget inside the `itemBuilder` to actually visually create the transition when an item is inserted by increasing the size of the widget (clipping it at the start and gradually showing it all) to animate the insertion of a widget.

All of that adds up to the following:

```
AnimatedList(  
  key: key,  
  initialItemCount: n
```

```

        maintenanceCount: i,
        itemBuilder(context, i, animation) =>
          SizeTransition(
            sizeFactor: animation,
            child: WidgetToShow()
          )
        )
      )
    )
  )
)

```

The `SizeTransition` isn't the only widget that can perform similar transitions (for example the similar `ScaleTransition` scales the widget up and down instead of clipping it), but it's the most effective for the purpose of animating a list.

Having the same `key` stored somewhere allows us to get the `AnimatedListState` object relative to that `AnimatedList` by writing:

```
var listState = key.currentState as AnimatedListState;
```

which allows us to add a list item by wrapping the following in a call to `setState`:

```
listState.insertItem(position);
```

keeping in mind that the `AnimatedList` needs to be able to build the new element at that position: if it's taking elements from a `List`, make sure there is actually new data to build the new item from.

A full example of a widget (or, more accurately, a stateful widget's state) that takes advantage of an `AnimatedList` to dynamically add items to a list when a floating action button is pressed is the following:

```

GlobalKey _key = GlobalKey<AnimatedListState>();
int _nextWidget = 3;
var _strings = [
  "First",
  "Second",
  "Third"
];

@override

```

```

Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(title: Text("Animated List")),
    body: AnimatedList(
      key: _key,
      initialItemCount: _nextWidget,
      itemBuilder: (context, i, animation) =>
        SizeTransition(
          sizeFactor: animation,
          child: ListTile(title: Text(_strings[i])),
        ),
    ),
    floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
      child: Icon(Icons.add),
      onPressed: () {
        setState(() {
          (_key.currentState as AnimatedListState).insertItem(
            _nextWidget++
          );
          _strings.add(
            "${_nextWidget}th"
          );
        });
      },
    ),
  );
}

```

These widgets provide the simplest kind of animation available in Flutter: the most interesting animations are provided by the [Hero](#) widget, which allows you to animate the movement of a widget across different screens.

## HERO ANIMATION

Hero animations are performed by the Flutter framework on [Hero](#) widgets. An [Hero](#) widget needs a [tag](#) that identifies it and a [child](#) (which is the widget to animate). Adding the same [tag](#) to two [Hero](#) widgets in two different screens, one of which is pushed from the other, will make the widget animate to move to its new position on the screen.

A simple example that demonstrates the use of the [Hero](#) widget

is the following: there are two pages that have in common a widget (I used `FlutterLogo` as an example) that is wrapped in an `Hero` widget with the same `tag`. Switching between the views by clicking the floating action button will cause the widget to animate between its centered position in the first page to a top-left position in the second page and vice versa:

```
class FirstPage extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Scaffold(
      body: Center(
        child: Hero(
          tag: "Flutter Logo Hero",
          child: FlutterLogo(),
        )
      ),
      floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
        child: Icon(Icons.looks_two),
        onPressed: () => Navigator.pushReplacement(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (context) => SecondPage()
          )
        ),
      ),
    );
}
```

```
class SecondPage extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Scaffold(
      body: Hero(
        tag: "Flutter Logo Hero",
        child: FlutterLogo(),
      ),
      floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
        child: Icon(Icons.looks_one),
        onPressed: () => Navigator.pushReplacement(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (context) => FirstPage()
          )
        ),
      ),
    );
}
```



# Custom Shapes and Drawing in Flutter Apps Using Painters

With [Canvas](#) and [Paint](#) we can change the look of a certain widget. That is done using a [CustomPainter](#), which is a class that allows us to draw lines and shapes on a virtual [Canvas](#).

## CUSTOMPAINT

[CustomPaint](#) is the widget that allows us to insert the custom shapes we'll create using a [CustomPainter](#) into the widget tree. It takes two arguments: a [CustomPainter](#) as the named [painter](#) and a [child](#) widget, which will be the widget on which the effect will be applied. For example, if we wanted to paint a Flutter logo widget using a custom painter we'll create called [LogoPainter](#), we'd insert the following into the widget tree:

```
CustomPaint(  
  painter: LogoPainter(),  
  child: FlutterLogo(),  
),
```

## CREATING A CUSTOMPAINTER

The [painter](#) needs to be a subclass of the [CustomPainter](#) widget we have to define ourselves by overriding the [paint](#) and [shouldRepaint](#) methods.

### The paint Method

The [paint](#) method takes two arguments: a [Canvas](#) and a [Size](#).

The [Canvas](#) is the object on which we will perform drawing operations, such as:

- Drawing lines, using [canvas.drawLine\(point1, point2, paint\)](#), where the

points are represented by `Offset`s (that we'll discuss later) and `paint` is of type `Paint` and decides the color and appearance of the line and will be discussed later.

- Drawing circles using `canvas.drawCircle(center, radius, paint)`, where `center` is an `Offset`, `radius` is a `double` and `paint` is a `Paint` object.
- Inserting an `Image` using `canvas.drawImage(image, point, paint)`, where `image` is the `dart:ui` library's `Image` class, about which there will be a sidebar at the end of this section.
- Drawing rectangles, using `canvas.drawRect(rect, paint)`, where `rect` is of class `Rect`, about which we're going to talk later in this section;
- Drawing ellipses using `canvas.drawOval(rect, paint)`, where the arguments are the same as the rectangle's, but will result in an oval being drawn instead of a rectangle.

The `Offset` class is used to represent a point in the absolute virtual plane of the app screen by using two `double` numbers (for example `Offset(0.0, 0.0)` is the origin of the virtual plane). You can choose offsets relative to various properties of the `Paint` widget using the properties and methods that are passed along with the `Canvas` to the `paint` method as part of the `Size` widget, as described in the official API reference.<sup>[52]</sup> Most of the time, you're going to use `Offset` like vectors to define shapes relative to some other points using `Size` as we'll see later.

The `Paint` class is used to define styling features (such as the color or the width) of the lines and shapes drawn on the canvas. The main ones are color and painting style: `paint.color` can be set to any color (for example `Colors.green`) and `paint.style` can be set to either `PaintingStyle.fill` or `PaintingStyle.stroke`, where the first one fills the shape with paint, whereas the second one only draws the edge. If you choose the latter, you may set `paint.strokeWidth` to any `double` value.

The `Rect` class is used to describe a rectangle in the plane. It is created from either two points (using the `Rect.fromPoints(point1,`

`point2`) constructor), which will generate the smallest possible rectangle that encloses the two points, from the left and right X coordinates and top and bottom and top Y coordinates (using `Rect.fromLTRB(left, top, right, bottom)`, where the arguments are all `double` values), or from a couple of edges, width and height (using `Rect.fromLTWH(left, top, width, height)`, the arguments are all `double` values just like with the previous constructor). `Rect.fromCircle(center, radius)`, with the same arguments as `Canvas.drawCircle`, is used to get a square from a circle.

The `Size` is used to generate `Offset` based on the size and positioning of the `CustomPaint`'s `child`. This can be done using methods such as `Size.center(offset)`, which will return an `Offset` that is obtained by considering the center of the widget we're painting as the origin of the plane and considering. Another way to see that is as the point obtained from the translation of the center of the widget by the vector `offset`. Other methods, such as `Size.bottomRight(offset)` can be used if you need to draw a point relative to other points of the widget.

#### Using `ui.Image`

The image passed to `drawImage` isn't a regular Flutter `Image` widget: it's the `Image` class found in the `dart:ui` library.<sup>[53]</sup>

An `ui.Image` (usually referred to with the 'ui.' prefix in documentation because 'dart:ui' is typically imported 'as ui' to differentiate it from the Flutter `Image` widget) is obtained as the 'image' property of an `ui.FrameInfo` object.

A `FrameInfo` can be obtained by running (and awaiting) `ui.Codec`'s `getNextFrame` method. Finally, an `ui.Codec` can be obtained using 'dart:ui's `instantiateImageCodec` function. This data can be obtained from an image file by using `dart:io`'s regular `File.readBytes` method.

#### The `shouldRepaint` Method

The `shouldRepaint` method has to be implemented, and it's an important optimization factor when talking about complex and resource-intensive `CustomPainters`.



It returns a boolean value that tells the framework whether or not the widget needs to be repainted. It is called whenever a `CustomPaint` object attempts to get painted with a new instance of a `CustomPainter` class. This method gets the old custom painter instance as an argument, so you can compare it with the new one to decide whether anything worthy of a re-render has changed.

In our case, we're just going to return `false` because the same object never gets called with different `CustomPainters`. For performance reasons, you should start with that and, if there are problems, try to make it more and more common that `shouldRepaint` returns `true` until all issues are fixed and the widgets get painted according to how you want them to be painted.

### An Example of a CustomPainter

`CustomPainters` allow a great degree of customization, so they are best described with an example to show you how to put together the basic concepts we talked about, so that you can get an idea of how it's done, keeping in mind that only the official API reference<sup>[54]</sup> can comprehensively list all of the possible transformations and shapes available:

```
class LogoPainter extends CustomPainter {
  @override
  void paint(Canvas canvas, Size size) {
    var greenPaint = Paint()
      ..style = PaintingStyle.fill
      ..color = Colors.green;
    var redPaint = Paint()
      ..style = PaintingStyle.fill
      ..color = Colors.red;
    var whitePaint = Paint()
      ..style = PaintingStyle.fill
      ..color = Colors.white;
    canvas.drawColor(Colors.blue, BlendMode.color);
    canvas.drawOval(
      Rect.fromPoints(
        size.topLeft(Offset(-40, -100)),
        size.bottomRight(Offset(15, 10))
      ),
      whitePaint
    );
  }
}
```

```

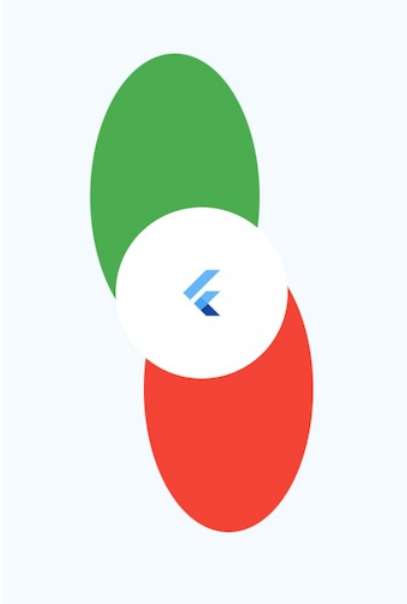
    },
    greenPaint
  );
  canvas.drawOval(
    Rect.fromPoints(
      size.topLeft(
        Offset(-15, -10)
      ),
      size.bottomRight(Offset(40, 100))
    ),
    redPaint
  );
  canvas.drawCircle(size.center(Offset(0, 0)), 40.0, whitePaint);
}

@override
bool shouldRepaint(CustomPainter old) {
  return false;
}
}

```

This example takes advantage of cascade notation (covered in *[Cascade Notation](#)*), which is a way to call multiple methods on an object or alter some of its properties without having to repeat the name of the object by returning the altered object and not the result of the method (`whitePaint..color=Colors.white` returns `whitePaint`, meaning we can add another two dots with another instruction, and it will be executed on the `whitePaint` object).

It results in the following being drawn when painting a `FlutterLogo`:



## HERO ANIMATIONS COMBINED WITH CUSTOMPAINT

The combination of these canvas painting abilities with hero animation could make for interesting user interaction animation in Flutter apps: let's imagine having two widgets similar to the one we've seen in the previous section, but in different colors and that serve as links to different views or different versions of the same view.

Let's start by defining the painters: a red, green and white one just like the previous one:

```
class GreenWhiteRedPainter extends CustomPainter {  
  @override  
  void paint(Canvas canvas, Size size) {  
    var greenPaint = Paint();  
    greenPaint.style = PaintingStyle.fill;  
    greenPaint.color = Colors.green;  
    var redPaint = Paint();  
    redPaint.style = PaintingStyle.fill;  
    redPaint.color = Colors.red;  
    var whitePaint = Paint();  
    whitePaint.style = PaintingStyle.fill;  
    whitePaint.color = Colors.white;  
    canvas.drawColor(Colors.blue, BlendMode.color);  
    canvas.drawOval(  
      Rect.fromPoints(  
        size.topLeft(Offset(-40, -100))
```

```

        size.topLeft(Offset(-15, -10)),
        size.bottomRight(Offset(15, 10))
    ),
    greenPaint
);
canvas.drawOval(
    Rect.fromPoints(
        size.topLeft(Offset(-15, -10)),
        size.bottomRight(Offset(40, 100))
    ),
    redPaint
);
canvas.drawCircle(size.center(Offset(0, 0)), 40.0, whitePaint);
}

@override
bool shouldRepaint(CustomPainter old) {
    return false;
}
}

```

and a blue and white one:

```

class BlueWhiteBluePainter extends CustomPainter {
    @override
    void paint(Canvas canvas, Size size) {
        var bluePaint = Paint();
        bluePaint.style = PaintingStyle.fill;
        bluePaint.color = Colors.blue;
        var whitePaint = Paint();
        whitePaint.style = PaintingStyle.fill;
        whitePaint.color = Colors.white;
        canvas.drawColor(Colors.blue, BlendMode.color);
        canvas.drawOval(
            Rect.fromPoints(
                size.topLeft(Offset(-40, -100)),
                size.bottomRight(Offset(15, 10))
            ),
            bluePaint
        );
        canvas.drawOval(
            Rect.fromPoints(
                size.topLeft(Offset(-15, -10)),
                size.bottomRight(Offset(40, 100))
            ),
            bluePaint
        );
        canvas.drawCircle(size.center(Offset(0, 0)), 40.0, whitePaint);
    }
}

```

```
}

@Override
bool shouldRepaint(CustomPainter old) {
    return false;
}
}
```

We'll use them in an app for two different widgets in a [Row](#) that will each pass themselves to a second view:

```
class FirstPage extends StatelessWidget {

  final widgets = [
    Hero(
      tag: "Blue White Red",
      child: CustomPaint(
        painter: BlueWhiteBluePainter(),
        child: Text("1"),
      ),
    ),
    Hero(
      tag: "Green White Red",
      child: CustomPaint(
        painter: GreenWhiteRedPainter(),
        child: Text("2"),
      ),
    ),
  ];

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Scaffold(
      body: Center(
        child: Row(
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceEvenly,
          children: <Widget>[
            Hero(
              tag: "Green White Red",
              child: CustomPaint(
                painter: BlueWhiteBluePainter(),
                child: GestureDetector(
                  child: Text("1"),
                  onTap: () => Navigator.pushReplacement(
                    context,
                    MaterialPageRoute(
                      builder: (context) => SecondPage(
                        widgets[0]
```

```

    )
  ),
),
),
),
Hero(
  tag: "Blue White Red",
  child: CustomPaint(
    painter: GreenWhiteRedPainter(),
    child: GestureDetector(
      child: Text("2"),
      onTap: () => Navigator.pushReplacement(
        context,
        MaterialPageRoute(
          builder: (context) => SecondPage(
            widgets[1]
          )
        )
      ),
    ),
  ),
),
),
),
),
],
),
),
);
}

```

that other view shows the widget in the top left corner of the screen, as a way to show what choice has been made and provides a way to go back:

```
class SecondPage extends StatelessWidget {
  SecondPage(this.topLeft);

  final Widget topLeft;

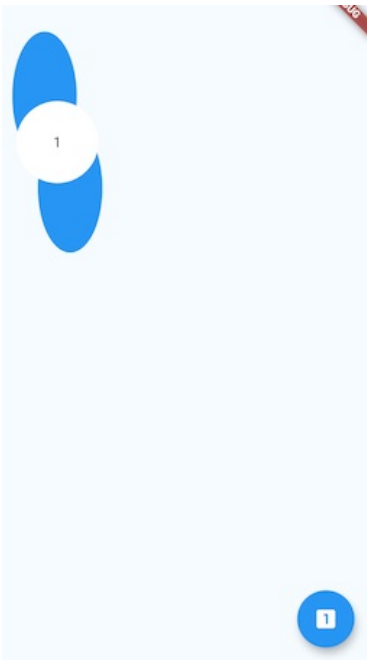
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    Scaffold(
      body: Padding(
        padding: EdgeInsets.only(left: 50.0, top: 150.0),
        child: topLeft,
      ),
      floatingActionButton: FloatingActionButton(
        child: Icon(Icons.looks_one),
        onPressed: () => Navigator.pushReplacement(
          context,
```

```
MaterialPageRoute(  
  builder: (context) => FirstPage()  
)  
,  
,  
);  
}
```

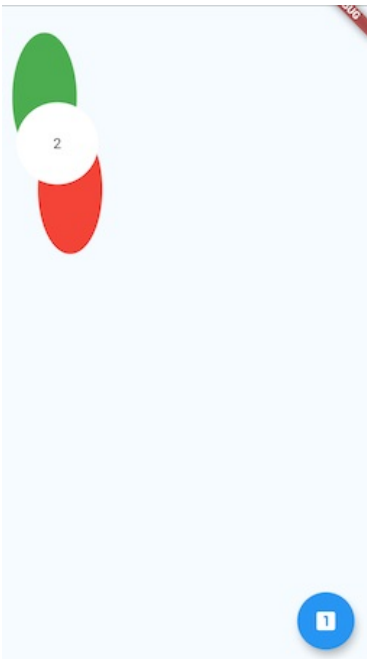
The first view will look like this:



When clicking the number 1 the view will animate to show the following:



and when clicking the number 2 the view will animate to show the following:



Clicking the floating action button in the second page will animate to the initial page with both buttons.



## The StreamBuilder

The `StreamBuilder` works just like a `FutureBuilder`, but it updates its content in real time to match the content of a given `stream`, instead of simply displaying the result of a given `future` like the `FutureBuilder` does:

```
StreamBuilder(  
  stream: myStream(),  
  builder: (context, snapshot) {  
    if(!snapshot.hasData) return CircularProgressIndicator();  
    return MyWidget(  
      data: snapshot.data  
    );  
  }  
)
```

# Building the Chat App

Now that we know how to use Firebase for what we need (authentication and database) and we have some more advanced UI notions, we can start building the chat app I promised we would work on.

## PLANNING OUR APP'S UI

A chat app needs the user to perform multiple actions when they first start the app:

- We need the user to insert an email address and password and either log into an existing account or create a new one if they don't have one yet, at this point the user should also receive an email asking him to verify his user account, but we're not going to make distinctions between verified and unverified users at this point.
- We need the user to choose a *display name* to use to identify themselves to other users in the app.
- If the user has done all of this, they should get to the page showing all messages sent by other users.

## BUILDING THE UI

We'll build the UI by creating each piece in the order in which the user will interact with it. Let's start with the Sign-Up/Sign-In page!

### Login/Signup Page

As we did in the previous chapter, we are going to use a [TextEditingController](#) to be able to access text entered into a [TextField](#) from outside its own [onSubmitted](#).

The UI is going to be the following (we'll implement the [login](#) and [signup](#) methods later in [Authentication](#)):

---

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  if(_verificationComplete) {
    Navigator.pushReplacement(
      context,
      MaterialPageRoute(
        builder: (context) => ConfigPage()
      )
    );
  }
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("ChatOnFire Login"),
    ),
    body: ListView(
      children: <Widget>[
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(15.0),
          child: Text(
            "Log In Using Your Phone Number",
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.display1,
          ),
        ),
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
          child: TextField(
            keyboardType: TextInputType.emailAddress,
            controller: _emailController,
            decoration: InputDecoration(
              labelText: "Email Address",
            ),
            autofocus: true,
          ),
        ),
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
          child: TextField(
            keyboardType: TextInputType.text,
            obscureText: true,
            controller: _passwordController,

```

```

            decoration: InputDecoration(
              labelText: "Password",
            ),
          ),
        ),
        Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),

```

```

child: FlatButton(
  color: Theme.of(context).accentColor,
  textColor: Colors.white,
  child: Text("Log In".toUpperCase()),
  onPressed: () {
    login(
      _emailController.text,
      _passwordController.text
    ).then(
      (user) {
        _user = user;
        if(!_user.isEmailVerified) {
          _user.sendEmailVerification();
        }
        _verificationComplete = true;
        Navigator.pushReplacement(
          context, MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (context) => ConfigPage()
          )
        );
      }
    ).catchError(
      (e) {
        Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
          SnackBar(
            content: Text(
              "You don't have an account. Please sign up."
            )
          )
        );
      }
    );
  },
),
),
Padding(
  padding: EdgeInsets.all(10.0),
  child: FlatButton(
    color: Theme.of(context).hintColor,
    textColor: Colors.white,
    child: Text("Create an Account".toUpperCase()),

```

```

    onPressed: () async {
      try {
        _user = await signUp(
          _emailController.text,
          _passwordController.text
        );
        if(!_user.isEmailVerified) {
          _user.sendEmailVerification();
        }
      }
    },

```

```

    }
    _verificationComplete = true;
    Navigator.pushReplacement(
      context, MaterialPageRoute(
        builder: (context) => ConfigPage()
      )
    );
  }
  catch(e) {
    Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
      SnackBar(
        content: Text("An error occurred")
      )
    );
  }
},
),
),
],
)
);
}

```

At this point no guidance should be needed to understand these widgets, all of which we have already used at some point.

An exception is `Navigator.pushReplacement`, which is just like `Navigator.push`, but it provides no way for the user to go back to the previous page. In this case each screen means that some progress has been done, so the previous screen was a worry of the past we don't want the user to accidentally go back to.

### Config Page

After logging in, the user has to enter a display name, so we need a screen called `ConfigPage` specifically meant to achieve that, since it's a step that requires authentication to have happened and is a prerequisite to using the chat page:

`firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart`

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {

```

```

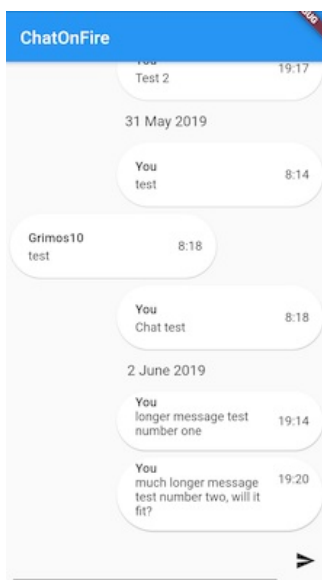
return Scaffold(
  appBar: AppBar(title: Text("Configure your account's basic information")),
  body: ListView(
    children: <Widget>[
      TextField(decoration: InputDecoration(
        labelText: "Display Name"
      )),
      onSubmitted: (displayName) =>
        setNameAndGoToChatPage(displayName, context),
      controller: _controller,
    ),
    FlatButton(
      child: Text("Submit"),
      onPressed: () =>
        setNameAndGoToChatPage(_controller.text, context),
    )
  ],
),
);
}

```

Once again, we're going to implement `setNameAndGoToChatPage` later. All we need to know about it is that it's certainly going to push a new screen, loading a widget called `ChatPage`, which we'll implement now.

### Chat Page

Here's what we're going to build in this section:



The `ChatPage` is going to consist of a `Column` that shows an

Expanded-wrapped `ListView` built using the messages passed to the `StreamBuilder` and a `Row`(shown at the bottom of the screen, since the `ListView` is going to be expanded by the `Expanded` widget) showing a `TextField` and an `IconButton` to send the message, making use of a `TextEditingController` as always:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return Scaffold(
    appBar: AppBar(
      title: Text("ChatOnFire"),
    ),
    body: Column(
      children: <Widget>[
        Expanded(
          child: StreamBuilder(
            stream: getMessages(),
            builder: (context, snapshot) =>
              snapshot.hasData ?
                MessagesList(snapshot.data as QuerySnapshot)
                :
                Center(child: CircularProgressIndicator())
          ),
        ),
        Row(
          children: <Widget>[
            Expanded(
              child: Padding(
                padding: const EdgeInsets.all(8.0),
                child: TextField(
                  controller: _messageController,
                  keyboardType: TextInputType.text,
                  onSubmitted: (txt) {
                    sendText(txt);
                    _messageController.clear();
                  }
                ),
              ),
            ),
            IconButton(
              icon: Icon(Icons.send),
              onPressed: () {
                sendText(_messageController.text);
                _messageController.clear();
              }
            )
          ]
        )
      ]
    )
  );
}
```

```

        )
      ],
    ),
  ],
),
);
}

```

As always, `getMessages` and the `MessagesList` will be defined later, when we implement an interface with the Cloud Firestore in *Database*.

## The List of Messages

In the `MessagesList` widget, we'll take the list of messages and create a `ListView` using the `ListView.builder` constructor, passing the data needed to show the message (sender, text, and timestamp) to a `Message` widget we'll build later.

The `ListView`'s `reverse` argument makes the list *start from the bottom*, meaning the first element will be shown at the bottom, which will be the scrolling view's default position, which will be held when new messages are added. This is the typical behavior of chat apps and we want to replicate it, so we'll set that to `true`:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```

class MessagesList extends StatelessWidget {
  MessagesList(this.data);

  final QuerySnapshot data;

  bool areSameDay(Timestamp a, Timestamp b) {
    var date1 = a.toDate().toLocal();
    var date2 = b.toDate().toLocal();
    return
      (date1.year == date2.year)
      &&
      (date1.month == date2.month)
      &&
      (date1.day == date2.day);
  }
}

```



```

        (date1.day -- date2.day),
    }

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) =>
    ListView.builder(
        reverse: true,
        itemCount: data.documents.length,
        itemBuilder: (context, i) {
            var months = [
                "January",
                "February",
                "March",
                "April",
                "May",
                "June",
                "July",
                "August",
                "September",
                "October",
                "November",
                "December"
            ];
            DateTime when = data
                .documents[i]
                .data["when"]
                .toDate()
                .toLocal();
            var widgetsToShow = <Widget>[
                Message(
                    from: data.documents[i].data["from"],
                    msg: data.documents[i].data["msg"],
                    when: when
                ),
            ];
            if(i == data.documents.length-1) {
                widgetsToShow.insert(
                    0,
                    Padding(
                        padding: const EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: 10.0),
                        child: Text(
                            "${when.day} ${months[when.month-1]} ${when.year}",
                            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subhead,
                        ),
                    ),
                );
            } else if(
                !areSameDay(
                    data.documents[i+1].data["when"],
                    data.documents[i].data["when"]
                )
            )

```

```

    )
  ) {
    widgetsToShow.insert(
      0,
      Padding(
        padding: const EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: 10.0),
        child: Text(
          "${when.day} ${months[when.month-1]} ${when.year}",
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subhead
        ),
      ),
    );
  }
  return Column(
    children: widgetsToShow
  );
}
);
}

```

You might have noticed that we are building the `ListView` using a `Column` that allows us to show the date on which a message was sent if it is different than the previous message's date. This is the preferred approach of many chat apps since it allows us to show the date only when it matters to the user.

One disadvantage is that doing it that way is a bit unintuitive and verbose: we need to have an `if` and an `else if` necessarily because having both conditions in the first `if` will cause the app to crash if we try to access the document at index `documents.length`, but it's made even worse by the fact that the list is created in two steps, making the contents less clear at first glance.

Dart 2.3 helps with that by allowing us to integrate `if` statements in list literals, allowing us to bypass the `widgetsToShow` variable completely and return a `Column` that has, at the start of the list of `children`, the following:

```

return Column(
  children: [

```

```

if(i == data.documents.length)
  Padding(
    padding: const EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: 10.0),
    child: Text(
      "${when.day} ${months[when.month-1]} ${when.year}",
      style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subhead
    ),
  )
else if(
  !areSameDay(
    data.documents[i+1].data["when"],
    data.documents[i].data["when"]
  )
)
  Padding(
    padding: const EdgeInsets.symmetric(vertical: 10.0),
    child: Text(
      "${when.day} ${months[when.month-1]} ${when.year}",
      style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subhead
    ),
  ),
),

```

This is more intuitive, but it requires you to change `pubspec.yaml`'s `environment` section to the following, requiring Dart version 2.3.0 or higher:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/pubspec.yaml
```

```

environment:
  sdk: ">=2.3.0 <3.0.0"

```

In case you wondered, for loops can be used inside list literals in a similar way starting from Dart version 2.3.2.

## Showing Each Message

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {

  return FutureBuilder(
    future: FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser(),
    builder: (context, snapshot) {
      if(snapshot.hasData) {
        FirebaseUser user = snapshot.data;

```

```

return Container(
  alignment: user.displayName == from
    ?
    Alignment.centerRight
    :
    Alignment.centerLeft,
  child: Container(
    width: MediaQuery.of(context).size.width/3*2,
    child: Card(
      shape: StadiumBorder(),
      child: ListTile(
        title: user.displayName != from
          ? Padding(
            padding: const EdgeInsets.only(
              top: 8.0,
              left: 5.0
            ),
            child: Text(
              from,
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle
            ),
          )
          : Padding(
            padding: EdgeInsets.only(left: 5.0),
            child: Text(
              "You",
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle
            ),
          ),
        subtitle: Padding(
          padding: const EdgeInsets.only(
            bottom: 10.0,
            left: 5.0
          ),
          child: Text(
            msg,
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.body1
          ),
        ),
      ),
    ),
  ),

```

```

        trailing: Text("${when.hour}:${when.minute}"),
      ),
    ),
  );
} else {
  return CircularProgressIndicator();
}
}
);
,

```

```
}
```

## IMPLEMENTING AN INTERFACE WITH FIREBASE

The emphasis on email/password authentication in the previous section was specifically meant to prepare you to implement this kind of authentication method in our chat app.

We're going to follow the flow of user interaction for this section as well and start with implementing an interface for authentication purposes.

### Authentication

In *Writing Log-In and Sign-Up Methods*, we saw how to implement a log-in method:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<FirebaseUser> login(  
  String email, String password  
) async =>  
  _auth.signInWithEmailAndPassword(  
    email: email,  
    password: password  
  );
```

and a sign-up method:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
Future<FirebaseUser> signUp(  
  String email, String password  
) async =>  
  _auth.createUserWithEmailAndPassword(  
    email: email,  
    password: password  
  );
```

What we're missing is a method that sets the display name and redirects to the chat page, as needed by the [ConfigPage](#).

That's something that you shouldn't find too hard since we have already seen how to change data such as the display

name when we've covered *The FirebaseUser*:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
void setNameAndGoToChatPage(String name, BuildContext context) {
  FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser().then(
    (user) {
      var newUserInfo = UserUpdateInfo();
      newUserInfo.displayName = name;
      user.updateProfile(newUserInfo);
    }
  );
  Navigator.pushReplacement(
    context,
    MaterialPageRoute(
      builder: (_) => ChatPage(),
    )
  );
}
```

### Database

Sending a message is done using the `CollectionReference.add` we mentioned when we talked about adding documents to the Cloud Firestore in *Adding Data to the Cloud Firestore*:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

```
void sendText(String text) =>
  FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser().then(
    (user) =>
      Firestore.instance.collection("Messages").add(
        {
          "from": user != null ? user.displayName : "Anonymous",
          "when": Timestamp.fromDate(DateTime.now().toUtc()),
          "msg": text,
        }
      )
  );
```

Among the methods discussed at the start of the chapter (*Reading from the Cloud Firestore*) to read data from the Cloud Firestore, we need to get a `Stream` to use with a `StreamBuilder`, so we use `CollectionReference.snapshots`:

```
firebase/chatonfire/lib/main.dart
```

---

```
Stream<QuerySnapshot> getMessages() =>
  Firestore
    .instance
    .collection("Messages")
    .orderBy("when", descending: true)
    .snapshots();
```

## ADDING A PROFILE PAGE: STORING USER DATA IN THE CLOUD FIRESTORE

There are some issues with our app: two users with the same display name would create confusion, since we are only storing a user's display name in the database, and not their ID, so our app would think a user was the sender of a message even if the user who sent the message was a completely different user that happened to have the same display name.

Additionally, the app doesn't really provide any way to distinguish between these two users, so that would be a confusing situation for everyone. A good start would be to provide users with a way to set a short string to customize their profile (usually called a status or a bio) and a way to contact another user of the chat app via email since we're already asking for that information.

### Creating a Collection for User Data

Let's create another collection! We'll call it *Users*, and it'll be structured the following way:

- The user's `uid` will be the document's ID, to make it easier to access the document corresponding to each user.
- The user's `displayName` will be a string called `displayName`.
- The user's email address will be another string called `email`.
- The user's bio will be stored as a string called `bio`.

### Changing the Documents and the App

We need to create entries to the user data collection for each

existing user of our app and change every entry in the collection of messages and substitute the display name with the user ID. Then, we'll worry about making the app work with the changed messages in the database, make it display the display name fetched from the Firestore, and then we'll work on building a profile page.

## Changing the Data

Creating the users' collection has to be done manually and it's a good idea generally to have a collection containing user data: that's how it is in most "traditional" databases and it's worth it to replicate it in Firebase, except for the fact we don't need (and shouldn't, and especially not in plain text) to store passwords in the database we can access.

Let's start with dealing with the changing data: to change each message in the database and substitute the values is easy enough when there aren't many messages since we can just change them manually in the Firebase console, but with bigger databases you'd have to write some code that (using the interfaces we learned about in this chapter) fetches the messages, finds the user with the given display name and substitutes the display name with the user ID.

### Making Smooth Transitions

During initial development (and in our case) an app has no users, so we can make changes to the database that stop a previous version of the app from working at any moment, but that's not the case when an app is already on the market and a significant change is made to the way data is stored.

Certainly, one of the first steps would be to inform the user of a previous version that their version of the app doesn't work anymore instead of just crashing the app, but giving the user a window of time to perform the update would also be something good, and that would be done, in our case, by storing the user ID as an additional property of a message, instead of replacing the previously used one, and then removing the (now useless) display name property after giving some time for the users to upgrade, showing users of the previous version a notice that they shouldn't use that version anymore.



Additionally, for other users who have updated their version of the app before many have had a chance to set a bio, you'd have to set every existing user's bio to some default value (which could be a blank "" or something different like the ones other chat apps use).

## Changing the App

The changes we need to make to our app start, as always, before the user even gets to the chat page. After log-in or sign-up, when we ask the user for a display name, we need to prompt the user to enter a bio.

We'll change the `setNameAndGoToChatPage(name, context)` to a generic `setDataAndGoToChatPage(name, bio, context)`. This addition means we need to define another `TextEditingController` and change the UI to this:

firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart

```
TextField(
  decoration: InputDecoration(
    labelText: "Display Name"
  ),
  controller: _nameController,
),
TextField(
  decoration: InputDecoration(
    labelText: "Bio"
  ),
  controller: _bioController,
),
FlatButton(
  child: Text("Submit"),
  onPressed: () =>
    setDataAndGoToChatPage(
      _nameController.text,
      _bioController.text, context
    ),
)
```

The method itself will do the same things `setNameAndGoToChatPage` did, but it will also add a document to

the Users collection:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
void setDataAndGoToChatPage(  
  String name,  
  String bio,  
  BuildContext context  
) {  
  FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser().then(  
    (user) {  
      var newUserInfo = UserUpdateInfo();  
      newUserInfo.displayName = name;  
      user.updateProfile(newUserInfo);  
      Firestore  
        .instance  
        .collection("Users")  
        .document(user.uid)  
        .setData(  
          {  
            "bio": bio,  
            "displayName": name,  
            "email": user.email,  
          }  
        );  
    }  
  );  
  Navigator.pushReplacement(  
    context,  
    MaterialPageRoute(  
      builder: (_) => ChatPage(),  
    )  
  );  
}
```

Another place where things need to change is the chat page, more specifically, the list of messages should pass the entire user to the [Message](#) class, so that it has all of the information about it that will also be needed by the [ProfilePage](#), but it should also pass the user ID, which isn't actually included in the [Map](#) that contains the user data, since the ID actually represents the path where to find the user data in the Firestore collection.

This requires changing the [Message](#) constructor and properties:

---

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
Message({this.from, this.msg, this.when, this.uid});
```

```
final Map<String, dynamic> from;  
final String uid;  
final String msg;  
final DateTime when;
```

and the call from the `MessagesList`:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
? Message(  
  from: (snapshot.data as DocumentSnapshot).data,  
  msg: data.documents[i].data["msg"],  
  when: when,  
  uid: data.documents[i].data["from"]  
)
```

The `Message` itself doesn't need to change a lot: it just needs to align widgets left or right by checking the UID we got from the `MessagesList` with the current user's ID instead of comparing display names, everything else will be supplied by the `from` argument. The other change is that the display name's `Text` widget (the `title` of each `ListTile`) will now be wrapped in an `InkWell` to make it possible for the user to tap it and go to the profile page:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
@override  
Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
  
  return FutureBuilder(  
    future: FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser(),  
    builder: (context, snapshot) {  
      if(snapshot.hasData) {  
        FirebaseUser user = snapshot.data;  
        return Container(  
          alignment: user.uid == uid  
            ? Alignment.centerRight  
            : Alignment.centerLeft,  
          child: Container(  
            width: MediaQuery.of(context).size.width*2/3,
```

```

child: Card(
  shape: StadiumBorder(),
  child: ListTile(
    title: user.uid != uid
      ?
      InkWell(
        child: Padding(
          padding: EdgeInsets.only(
            top: 8.0,
            left: 5.0
          ),
          child: Text(
            from["displayName"],
            style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle
          ),
        ),
        onTap: () =>
          Navigator.push(
            context,
            MaterialPageRoute(
              builder: (context) => ProfilePage(from)
            )
          ),
      )
    :
    InkWell(
      child: Padding(
        padding: EdgeInsets.only(left: 5.0),
        child: Text(
          "You",
          style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle
        ),
      ),
      onTap: () =>
        Navigator.push(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (context) => ProfilePage(from)
          )
        ),
    ),
    subtitle: Padding(
      padding: const EdgeInsets.only(
        bottom: 10.0,
        left: 5.0
      ),
      child: Text(
        msg,
        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.body1
      ),
    ),
  ),

```

```

    ),
    trailing: Text("${when.hour}:${when.minute}"),
  )
),
);
} else {
  return CircularProgressIndicator();
}
}
);
}

```

### Creating a Profile Page

The profile page, as we said previously, needs to show three things: the user's display name, the bio, and a button to send an email. To do the latter we need a new package: the `url_launcher` package, which allows us to launch an URL from the app.

### Using `url_launcher` to Launch an URL and Send an Email

Since an URL can also be used to create an email by prefixing the email address to which to send the email with `mailto:`, we need to add the `url_launcher` package to the dependencies in `pubspec.yaml` and import it into `main.dart`:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:url_launcher/url_launcher.dart';
```

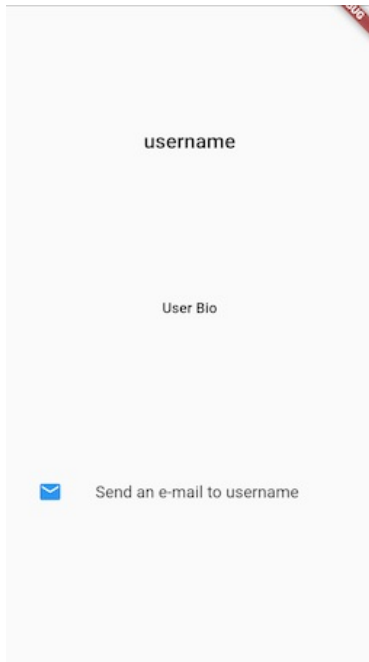
The package provides two functions:

- `canLaunch(url)`, which returns a `Future<bool>` and checks whether there are any apps that are capable of handling the URL we're trying to launch.
- `launch(url)`, which launches the URL asynchronously, throwing a `PlatformException` if no app was able to handle the URL.

The profile page UI itself is going to be very simple: a `Column` (with evenly spaced children) with two `Text` widgets (one for the display name and one for the bio) and a `FlatButton` to allow

the user to send an email.

More specifically, the `FlatButton` is going to have an icon as well as text as shown in the screenshot.



The code is the following:

firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart

```
class ProfilePage extends StatelessWidget {  
  ProfilePage(this.user);
```

```
  final Map<String, dynamic> user;
```

```
  @override  
  Widget build(context) {  
    return Scaffold(  
      body: Center(  
        child: Column(  
          crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.center,  
          mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.spaceEvenly,  
          children: <Widget>[  
            Text(  
              user["displayName"],  
              style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.title  
            ),  
            Text(  
              user["bio"],
```

```

        style: Theme.of(context).textTheme.subtitle
    ),
    FlatButton.icon(
      icon: Icon(Icons.email),
      label: Text("Send an e-mail to ${user["displayName"]}"),
      onPressed: () async {
        var url =
          "mailto:${user["email"]}?body=${user["displayName"]},\n";
        if(await canLaunch(url)) {
          launch(url);
        } else {
          Scaffold.of(context).showSnackBar(
            SnackBar(
              content: Text("You don't have any e-mail app"),
            )
          );
        }
      }
    )
  ],
),
);
}
}

```

## Allowing Users to Edit Their Bio

A user might want to edit their bio in the future. For that, we'll provide an [AppBar](#) action in the chat page that fires up a new page called [ChangeBioPage](#):

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```

appBar: AppBar(
  title: Text("ChatOnFire"),
  actions: [
    IconButton(
      tooltip: "Change your bio",
      icon: Icon(Icons.edit),
      onPressed: () =>
        Navigator.push(
          context,
          MaterialPageRoute(
            builder: (context) => ChangeBioPage()
          )
        ),
    ),
  ],
),

```

```
,  
],  
),
```

The page itself is going to be very similar to the [ConfigPage](#):

```
firebase/chatonfire2/lib/main.dart
```

```
class ChangeBioPage extends StatelessWidget {  
  final _controller = TextEditingController();
```

```
  void _changeBio(String bio) =>  
    FirebaseAuth.instance.currentUser().then(  
      (user) {  
        Firestore  
          .instance  
            .collection("Users")  
            .document(user.uid)  
            .updateData(  
              {  
                "bio": bio  
              }  
            );  
      }  
    );  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(context) =>  
    Scaffold(  
      appBar: AppBar(  
        title: Text("Change your bio"),  
      ),  
      body: Center(  
        child: Column(  
          children: <Widget>[  
            Padding(  
              padding: const EdgeInsets.all(8.0),  
              child: TextField(  
                controller: _controller,  
                decoration: InputDecoration(  
                  labelText: "New Bio"  
                ),  
                onSubmitted: (bio) {  
                  _changeBio(bio);  
                  Navigator.pop(context);  
                }  
              ),  
            ),  
          ],  
        ),  
      ),  
    );  
  FlatButton(  
    onPressed: () {  
      _changeBio("");  
    },  
    child: Text("Cancel"),  
  ),  
  FlatButton(  
    onPressed: () {  
      _changeBio("");  
    },  
    child: Text("Save"),  
  ),  
);
```



```

        child: Text("Change Bio"),
        onPressed: () {
          _changeBio(_controller.text);
          Navigator.pop(context);
        }
      ),
    ],
  ),
);
}

```

## MAKING THE APP MORE SECURE BY LOCKING DOWN ACCESS TO THE FIRESTORE

Since we've implemented authentication, we shouldn't keep the Cloud Firestore database rules as open as they are now because, even though we allow anyone to sign up, we should try to constrain access to the minimum necessary for the app to work.

### What We're Going to Do

More specifically we need to do the following:

- Only allow users authenticated with a given `uid` to add or edit a user with that `uid` to the users' collection, letting everybody read user data, but allowing nobody to delete users (at the moment we're not offering that option).
- Only allow users authenticated with a given `uid` to add a message that declares to be from that `uid`, letting everybody access the messages, but allowing nobody to edit or delete them (for the same reason: we're not offering that option to users at the moment).

### Implementing the Restriction

All of that is achieved by the following Cloud Firestore configuration (to be inserted in *Database* -> *Rules* in the Firebase console):

```

service cloud.firestore {
  match /databases/{database}/documents {
    match /Users/{userId} {
      allow create, update: if request.auth.uid == userId;
    }
  }
}

```

```
allow create: if request.auth.uid != null;
}

match /Messages/{messageId} {
  allow create: if request.auth.uid == request.resource.data.from;
  allow read: if request.auth != null;
}
}
```

## matching Documents

`match /databases/{database}/documents` makes it so the root path of everything in the curly braces after that statement is at collection-level, meaning that, for example, `/Users/ABCD` is the document of the collection *Users* that has ID *ABCD*.

Inside that, we have other two `match` statements:

- `match /Users/{userId}`, where we're going to regulate access to the *Users* collection.
- `match /Messages/{message}`, where we're going to worry about access to the *Messages* collection.

## allowing Access

`allow` statements are used in the following way:

```
allow operation: if condition;
```

The operation can be either just `read` or `write`, or a more specific aspect of `write`, like `create`, `update` and `delete`. It can also be a comma-separated list of operations.

The condition can be just `true` or `false` (like we did at the start), but it should take into consideration both what document the user is trying to access and who the user is (whether they're authenticated, what their UID is, etc.).

In our case, for each condition, we can use three pieces of data: whatever is in the curly braces in the path of any `match statement` that encloses it (for example, in the case of the *Users match* statement, `{userId}`, which is the path of the user document, in other words its ID), the `request` interface and the `resource` interface.

Let's start with the latter: the `resource` interfaces contains data about the resource we're trying to read, update, or delete. For example, if we wanted to access the `from` field of a message, we would write `resource.data.from`.

Very similar to `resource` is `request.resource`, which is the incoming data from the request. For example, if the request is trying to add a user, we would access that user's bio with `request.resource.data.bio`. Another important property of the `request` interface is `request.auth`, which tells us whether the user who's trying to access the Firestore is authenticated, and what their credentials are. For example, if the user is not authenticated `request.auth` will be equal to `null`; if, instead, the user is authenticated `request.auth.uid` will return the UID of the user who's trying to access the Firestore.

Combining all of these aspects and our requirements gives us the following for the *Users*:

```
match /Users/{userId} {  
  allow create, update: if request.auth.uid == userId;  
  allow read: if request.auth != null;  
}
```

and the following for the *Messages*:

```
match /Messages/{messageId} {  
  allow create: if request.auth.uid == request.resource.data.from;  
  allow read: if request.auth != null;  
}
```

#### A Few Words on Making Data in the Firestore More Secure

#### A Few Words on Making Data in the Firestore More Secure

Now the data is inaccessible to anonymous users and, in the case of a public chat, it's fine. But what about one-on-one or group chat apps? For one, you would need to separate messages from different conversations, which would be rather simple, but a really important issue is that of privacy and confidentiality: the messages would be stored in plain text in the database, allowing those who run the app to spy on conversations, which would all be revealed in case of a security incident. That is the reason why most one-on-one chat apps implement some sort of encryption, storing in the database encrypted messages that can only be encrypted using keys stored on each user's device.

#### Password Reset and Verifying Email Addresses

For the purposes of our chat app, we don't really need to differentiate users who have verified their email address and those who haven't, since we're not even offering password reset via email (which is achieved by running `_auth.sendPasswordResetEmail`). You could, though, choose to make those who haven't yet verified their email appear in the list of messages differently (changing their display name text to a different color, for example, or showing an approval icon next to users with verified email addresses), but it's not really needed.

In the case of other apps the ability to do all of this without having to rely on anything other than Firebase and in such a simple way is certainly a good reason to be interested in Firebase as a tool to help create apps that would otherwise have to rely on servers and separate back-end code to work.

## Where You're Going Next

You're done, congratulations! Now all that's left to do is to apply the knowledge you've acquired to the real world. There is a great community of Flutter-related content online, starting from the great and comprehensive official API reference I mentioned so many times during the course of this book. Navigating that requires some knowledge of the overall structure and inner-workings of a Flutter app and I hope you've been able to get that from reading this book.

If you don't feel comfortable writing Flutter apps because you feel like you need to learn more about Dart, Appendix 1, *Introduction to Dart* might be just what you need.

Perhaps after that you will find something more interesting: the body of this book has been focused on building Material Design UIs, interacting with packages and plugins, and writing Dart code. In Appendix 2, *Apple-Like Look and Additional App Configuration* you will find out how to write apps that look like native iOS apps using Cupertino widgets and how to make your app fit in with each OS's typical style; it also contains some useful information regarding additional app configuration, contained in both [pubspec.yaml](#) and the platform-specific [android](#) and [ios](#) directories. For example, the platform-specific configuration allows you to change the launcher icon and the app name to whatever you want (since by default you can only set lowercase names without spaces with Flutter, but you can edit the platform-specific configuration to set the app name to be whatever can be a regular Android/iOS app name).

Because of all of that, it's strongly recommended that you read the second appendix.

Anyway, this book can't possibly contain all of the different widgets, features, and options that Flutter offers you: now it's up to you to find what you need. After having seen so much of how Flutter works and what it can do, you're well positioned to navigate the vast array of official and community-created content about whatever niche aspect of Flutter you'd like to explore next.

---

#### Footnotes

[46] <https://console.firebase.google.com/>

[47] [https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/firebase\\_core](https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/firebase_core)

[48] <https://github.com/flutter/plugins/blob/master/FlutterFire.md>

[49] [https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/firebase\\_auth](https://pub.dartlang.org/packages/firebase_auth)

[50] [https://pub.dev/documentation/firebase\\_auth/latest/firebase\\_auth/AuthCredential-class.html](https://pub.dev/documentation/firebase_auth/latest/firebase_auth/AuthCredential-class.html)

[51] <https://docs.flutter.io/flutter/animation/Curves-class.html>

[52] <https://api.flutter.dev/flutter/dart-ui/Size-class.html>

[53] <https://api.flutter.dev/flutter/dart-ui/Image-class.html>

[54] <https://api.flutter.dev/flutter/dart-ui/Canvas-class.html>

## Appendix 1

# Introduction to Dart

Dart is a new language, and you might not be aware of its syntax and some of its features. Here I'll provide an overview of Dart so that you can have a better grasp on how it works.

Dart, in many ways, resembles C, C++, and Java, so developers with good knowledge of those languages shouldn't have too many issues understanding the code in the book, but there are also differences that I'll point out along the way.

This appendix is also a good starting point for people who don't have much programming experience.

## Comments in Dart

Comments are sections of code that won't be evaluated by the compiler and won't be executed. Just like in C, Java, JavaScript, and similar languages, comments are created in two ways:

- Single-line comments are created by adding `//` before the comment.
- Multi-line comments are created by adding `/*` before the comment and `*/` after it.

For example:

```
// this is a comment  
int a = 3; // this is also a comment  
/* this is also  
  a long, long  
  comment */
```

where `int a = 3;` is regular code (not a comment) and will be evaluated by the compiler and executed.



# Variables and Conditions

Variables can be declared in two ways in Dart:

- In the *traditional* C-like way, by prefixing the variable name with the data type:

```
int a = 3;
```

- By prefixing the variable name with ‘var’:

```
var a = 3;
```

A list of some of the most common data types is provided at the end of this appendix.

## CHARACTERS AND STRINGS

In some languages there are `char` types for single characters and arrays of `chars` or separate types for strings. In Dart, the `String` type is the only character/string type, and it can contain one or more characters. For that reason, unlike in other languages, you can use single or double quotes to enclose what you assign to the string (called a *string literal*):

```
String greeting = "Hi!";
```

will work just as well as:

```
var greeting = 'Hi!';
```

Like in many other modern languages, two strings can be concatenated using the same `+` operator you use for addition between numbers:

```
var firstGreeting = "Hi" + "!";  
assert(firstGreeting == 'Hi!');
```

What’s `assert`? It’s something you will get used to seeing

reading this appendix: its effect in compiled code is that, in a testing/debugging situation (it does nothing on production code), it terminates the execution if the condition in its parentheses isn't true, but it's widely used in programming language tutorials and documentation to explain language features. Whenever you see one in this appendix, you should expect the condition inside its parentheses to always be true.

### The Backslash

Just like in many other languages, the backslash can be used to escape some characters or insert special characters.

For example, if you wanted to have quotes inside a string, you have two ways to do it:

- You use different kind of quotes to enclose the string (for example `'He said: "Hi!"'`).
- You escape the quotes (for example, `"He said: \"Hi!\""`).

For the special characters part, this will be familiar especially to C developers; the `\n` character can be used to go to a new line:

```
Text("First line\nSecond line")
```

will render *Second line* below *First line*.

Obviously, the backslash itself has to be escaped to be used as part of a string:

```
Text("\\ is the backslash character")
```

will display `\ is the backslash character`.

### String Interpolation

String interpolation allows you to insert one or more variables' value into a string. Let's first explore how things would be

done *without* string interpolation.

For example, if you wanted to display the value of an `int` with a `Text`, you can't just write:

```
int number;  
  
// (...)  
  
Text(number)
```

because `Text` expects a `String`. This means you need to change that to:

```
Text(number.toString())
```

What if you want to display a string and the number? Then you would need to write something like this, using string concatenation:

```
"You tapped the button" + number.toString() + "times"
```

What string interpolation allows you to do is write this instead:

```
"You tapped the button $number times"
```

By prefixing a variable's name with `$` you can insert its value into the string. If you need to access an element of a `List`, the member of a class, or write any kind of expression, you need to enclose the statement in curly braces. If you had a list like the following:

```
List numbers = [1, 2, 3];
```

you would use string interpolation like this:

```
"There are ${numbers.length} and second element is number ${numbers[1]}"
```

### Multi-Line Strings and Raw Strings

Like in many other languages, you can make multi-line strings by using triple quotes and you can make raw strings by

prefixing the opening quotes with the letter “r”.

A multi-line string makes it so that you can turn this:

```
"First line\nSecond line";
```

or this:

```
"First line\n" +  
"Second line"
```

into this:

```
""  
First line  
Second line  
""
```

A raw string treats any special characters inside it (\$, \, and so on) like any other character, without giving it any special meaning that you can write just:

```
r"\ is the backslash character"
```

## CONDITIONS: BOOLEAN ALGEBRA IN DART

Dart conditions will look exactly like the conditions you find in C, Java or JavaScript: you use `==`, `!=`, `>`, `<`, `<=` and `>=` to compare values, and you use `&&` as the AND operator, `||` as the OR operator and `!` as the NOT operator.

## IMMUTABLE VARIABLES: FINAL AND CONST

If the variable doesn't need to vary at all, there are two keywords that can make sure the compiler knows your wish: `final` and `const`:

- A `final` variable's value can't be changed: you initialize it with a value and that value is stored there forever, this is needed for all widget properties in Flutter because widgets themselves are immutable.
- `const` is used to create compile-time constants: the compiler will evaluate

the value of the constant when you build your app, so you can't have `const` arguments.

You use these two keywords by replacing the word `var` with them:

```
const a = 3;
```

or by prefixing the variable data type with one of them:

```
final String greeting = "Hi!";
```

## LISTS AND COLLECTION LITERALS

A `List` is what is commonly referred to as an array: an ordered collection of data, the elements of which are indexed with the values from 0 to `length-1` where the `length` of a `List` is the number of elements it contains. A `List` can be initialized with a list literal, which is a comma-separated list of values enclosed in square brackets:

```
var list = [30, 20, 500];

assert(list[0] == 30);
assert(list[1] == 20);
assert(list[2] == 500);
```

### If and For in List Literals

List literals in Dart can do more than that, though—you can have `if` statements in them:

```
bool condition;

// ...

var list = [
  if(condition)
    "First"
  else
    "First, alternative",
  "Second"
];
```

```

assert(list[1] == "Second");

if(condition)
  assert(list[0] == "First");
else
  assert(list[0] == "First, alternative");

/*
 * As in other languages, these latest two assert() calls could become one:
 * assert((condition && list[0] == "First") ||
 *       (!condition && list[0] == "First, alternative"))
 */

```

### Adding and Removing Items from Lists

An item can be added to the end of a list by using [List.add](#):

```

var l = [1, 2, 3];

l.add(4);

assert(l[3] == 4);

```

An item can be removed in two main ways (there are others, feel free to check out all [List](#) methods at the official Dart language reference<sup>[55]</sup>). One of them is by passing the value you want to remove with [List.remove](#) (which will only remove the first occurrence):

```

var l = ["Test", "test", "Test"];

l.remove("Test");

assert(l[0] == "test");
assert(l[1] == "Test"); // The second occurrence won't be removed

```

The other is by passing the index at which you want to remove an element to [List.removeAt](#):

```

var l = [5, 6, 7];

l.removeAt(1);

assert(l[1] == 7);

```

### Generating Lists

One of the ways to create lists is by using the `List.generate` constructor, which takes two arguments: the number of elements the list will have and a callback function (a function to be run by another function in certain conditions and with certain arguments) that generates each element based on its index.

For example, this is how you'd create a list from the concatenation of the strings contained in two lists:

```
var l1 = ["First", "Second", "Third"];
var l2 = ["1", "2", "3"];

var l = List.generate(3, (index) => l1[i]+l2[i]);
```

If this example wasn't clear to you, check out the section about functions (*Functions*) and the one about classes (*Classes*).

### Iterating Over Lists: for, map, and forEach

We've found out how to generate lists, now what about how to iterate over the elements of a list? There are multiple ways to do that:

- The `for in` loop.
- The `.forEach` method.
- The `.map` method.

### The for in Loop

Present in most modern languages, it's a special kind of *Loops: while, do while, and for* that iterates over the elements of a list:

```
var listName = [
  "First",
  "Second",
  "Third",
```

```
    "Fourth"  
  };  
  
  for(var elName in listName) {  
    print(elName);  
  }  
}
```

## map and forEach

Particularly loved by some for their functional style, the `Iterable`'s `map` and `forEach` methods are alternatives to the `for in` loop.

`forEach` is the most similar to the `for` loop, as it is used to execute an operation on (or for) each of the elements of a list. The callback closure you use is of type `void`, so you can't return anything. Here's an example, showing how to print each element of a list:

```
listName.forEach((el) {  
  print(el);  
});
```

`map` is different: it is used to create an `Iterable` from calling a function on each element of the `List`, here's an example:

```
var numbers = [  
  1,  
  2,  
  3,  
  4,  
  5,  
  6  
];  
  
var iter = numbers.map((el) => "#$el");
```

`iter` is an `Iterable`, not a proper `List`. If you want to access the elements directly just like you do with a list, you need to use the `toList` method:

```
var list = numbers.map((el) => "#$el").toList();
```



## THE UNDERSCORE

You might have seen in many code examples that we have prefixed some variable or class names with an underscore (`_`). It is used to make them *library private*.

For example, when we write:

```
class MyWidget extends StatefulWidget {  
  // (...)  
}  
  
class _MyWidgetState extends State<MyWidget> {  
  // (...)  
}
```

We are making the `MyWidgetState` class *library private*, meaning it is only accessible from within the current package: if you are working on a library and you want to make a class or top-level function inaccessible to users of that library, you use the underscore this way.

Using the underscore for class members is used to make it inaccessible from outside its class definition, like in the following example:

```
class CounterClass {  
  int _counter = 0;  
  
  void _setCounterTo(int n) {  
    _counter = n;  
  }  
  
  int getCounter() => _counter  
  
  void increaseCounter() => _setCounterTo(_counter+1);  
}
```

which is obviously a lot more complicated than it needs to be (`_setCounterTo` adds unnecessary complication) in order to show how different kinds of methods may be chosen to be set as private: if we are making a counter class, we want to be able to

get the current value of the counter, but we don't need to change it to any value other than it incremented by 1, so we only give access to a method that does exactly that and another that returns the value of the counter.

## OTHER ITERABLE DATA STRUCTURES: MAPS, SETS, AND MORE

The `Map` is a key/value collection, similar to JSON objects and often used as the way to handle JSON objects in Dart as a simpler alternative to defining a class for each kind of object the app works with. A `Map` literal is enclosed in curly braces and looks something like this:

```
var user = {  
  "userId": 1,  
  "firstName": "Carmine",  
  "lastName": "Zaccagnino"  
};
```

You can access and add elements to a `Map` by using the same `[]` and `[]` you'd use to access and modify elements of a `List`:

```
var name = "${user["firstName"]} ${user["lastName"]}";  
user["password"] = "my!!Very!!own!!Very!!safe1passWordstr";
```

A `Set` is a linear collection of different values:

```
var G8 = {  
  "United States",  
  "Japan",  
  "Germany",  
  "United Kingdom",  
  "France",  
  "Italy",  
  "Canada",  
  "Russia"  
};
```

You can remove an item from a `Set` by value using `remove` and add one using `add`:

```
var G7 = G8
  ..remove("Russia")
  ..add("European Union");
```

## Set Literals



Set literals using curly braces are supported starting from Dart version 2.2, in earlier versions the most similar way was to use the `Set.from` method, which takes a `List`:

```
var countriesByGDP = Set.from(["USA", "PRC", /*...*/]);
```

There are many more `Iterables`. A very common one in computer science is the linked list, which can be implemented using `LinkedList`, but there is also a `Queue` class and the unordered hash table-based alternatives to the `Map` and `Set` called `HashMap` and `HashSet`.

## NUMBERS: THE NUM TYPE AND ITS SUBCLASSES

The `num` class is a generic number class, and its subclasses are `int` for integers and `double` for floating-point numbers. There's no `float` in Dart; floating-point numbers are all 64-bit `doubles`.

Keeping with the mathematical notation used in the UK and the United States, the decimal separator is a dot (.). You can specify powers of 10 by using `e`:

```
var a = 5.2e2;

assert(a == 520);
```

`double` numbers can be rounded using `round` (which rounds away from 0 with the decimal part starting from .5), rounded down by using `floor` or rounded up using `ceil`:

```
var a = 5.2;

assert(a.round() == 5);
assert(a.floor() == 5);
assert(a.ceil() == 6);

var b = 5.5;

assert(a.round() == 6);
```

An hexadecimal integer is obtained by prefixing it with `0x`:

```
assert(0x7E3 == 2019);
```

### Lists of Bytes and More: the `dart:typed_data` library

When reading binary data, using a `List` of 64-bit `ints` is extremely inefficient if all each of those integers is doing is clearly less than optimally efficient. That's why the `dart:typed_data` contains the `Uint8List` class, which works exactly like the regular `List`, but with 8-bit integers.

### Type Casting

Type casting in Dart is done in one of the following two ways.

You can use an `as` expression to cast a value to one of its subtypes:

```
num a = 5;

var a_int = a as int;

assert(a_int is int);
```

or use `cast` to cast all values of `List` to a specified type:

```
List<num> l = [1, 2, 3];

var l_int = l.cast<int>();
```

```
assert(l_int[0] is int);
```

# Functions

Dart supports top-level functions, meaning you can define functions outside any class definition that can be called from anywhere in the code.

A Dart function is defined in the following way:

```
returnType functionName(parameters) {  
  blockOfInstructions;  
  return returnValue;  
}
```

where:

- **returnType** is the data type, see the section [\*Conversion Between Native Java/Apple and Dart Data Types\*](#), the function will return.
- The parameters, explained in the next paragraph, which will be the data the function will use to do what it needs to do. Parameters are variables and their value is set using function call arguments. If you are not familiar with functions and function calls, the example that follows is designed to give a real, working example of a few functions that take advantage of other functions.
- In the curly braces is where you add the block of instructions (one or more lines) which, if the function has any return type other than **void**, includes a **return** instruction, which is used to return a value to the calling code.

For example, the following function is very simple:

```
double square(double n) {  
  return n*n;  
}
```

but it can be used inside a function to calculate gravitational attraction, which is slightly more complex, with more parameters:

```
// We'll see how to set all of those arguments soon
```

```

double calculateGravitationalAttraction(double mass1, double mass2,
double distance)
{
    const G = 6.67e-11; // universal gravitation constant
    /*
     * Calling the square function using distance as
     * the only argument (n will be equal to
     * the value in the distance variable)
     * and saving the return value
     * to the squaredDistance variable
     */
    const squaredDistance = square(distance);
    return G*mass1*mass2/squaredDistance;
}

```

and it, in turn, can be used to calculate, for example, the force of attraction between the earth and the sun, potentially wrapped inside another function:

```

double calculateSunEarthAttraction() {
    const earthMass = 5.97e24; // mass of the Earth
    const sunMass = 1.99e30; // mass of the Sun
    const dist = 1.496e8; // distance between the Earth and the Sun
    /*
     * Calling the calculateGravitationalAttraction
     * function setting the arguments one by one
     * in the order of the parameters in the
     * function's definition and returning
     * its return value to any other function
     * that needs the value of the force of
     * attraction between the Sun and the Earth
     */
    return calculateGravitationalAttraction(earthMass, sunMass, dist);
}

```

## FUNCTION PARAMETERS

Up until now, we have only used positional parameters: you define them like variables, one after another, and you set the arguments in the same way, following the same order.

Now, though, you need to know about *named* parameters, which allow the calling function to set the arguments in a different order (or even for just some of the parameters) by specifying a name for each parameter. If you wrap the

parameters in curly braces, you'll make them *named* and *optional*, like in the following example:

```
double calculateSunPlanetAttraction({})
```

## THE ARROW

If the function will be simply composed of one instruction, you can use the arrow notation, so that:

```
int square(int n) {  
  return n*n;  
}
```

becomes:

```
int square(int n) => n*n;
```

usually written, especially when the expression is longer, as:

```
int square(int n) =>  
  n*n;
```

## ANONYMOUS FUNCTIONS AND CLOSURES

Closures are what we use to define callbacks. They are functions defined as variables or, more specifically, variables of type `Function` or *Typedef and Callbacks*.



## **main**

Main is the function that gets called when we start any kind of Dart program, including Flutter apps. It has a `void` return type and it takes no arguments. It can be `async`.

# Asynchronous Code in Dart: The `dart:async` Library

At some point during your Dart development process, you might need to call a method without affecting the execution of your code, or call a library method that has been declared as an `async` method.

That's when you realize the necessity for asynchronous code and the `dart:async` built-in Dart library, which allows `async` functions to return either a `Future` or a `Stream`.

## THE FUTURE

The `Future` is the most basic object type related to asynchronous methods—it is the return type of all `async` functions, including `void` ones:

```
Future<void> doSomethingThatTakesLong() async {  
  // do something  
}
```

```
void callingSyncFunction() {  
  doSomethingThatTakesLong();  
  /* the code won't wait for the function to  
   * finish its execution and it will carry on  
   * in its regular order, executing  
   * the next instruction  
   */  
}
```

If you need to wait for the function to stop executing (perhaps because you need the returned value), you need to choose between using `await` or `.then`.

### `await`

`await` is useful when you actually need to wait for an `async`

function to finish its execution, often because you need its return value. It converts a [Future](#) into the value returned by the function by waiting for the code that returned the future to finish its execution:

```
Future<int> getValue() async {  
  return 5;  
}  
  
Future<int> callingFunction() async {  
  var n = await getValue();  
  return n+5;  
}
```

### **then(), catchError(), and whenComplete()**

If there are some actions you want to take when the [Future](#) returns a value, but it doesn't affect the rest of the current code block's execution or its return value, you can use the [Future](#)'s [.then](#) method, which allows you to add a callback function to be called with the [Future](#)'s return value when it is available:

```
Future<int> getValue() async {  
  return 5;  
}  
  
void main() {  
  getValue().then((n) {  
    assert(n == 5);  
  });  
  /* something else that  
   * won't wait for getValue  
   * to return to execute  
   */  
}
```

What if there's a runtime error in the execution of the future? That's when we use [catchError](#):

```
void printValue() {  
  getValue()  
    .then(print)  
    .catchError((err) {  
      // handle error  
    });  
}
```

```
}
```

You can add a `whenComplete` call (a lot like a `finally` block) for code that needs to be executed regardless of anything that happens.

## STREAMS AND STREAMSUBSCRIPTIONS

There are certain kinds of data that are subject to frequent change, like the battery and connectivity status we saw in Chapter 4, *Beyond the Standard Library*:

*Plugins and Packages* or the documents in the Firebase Cloud Firestore we saw in Chapter 7, *Build a Chat App Using Firebase*. For this kind of data, we use special asynchronous methods that `yield` different values at different times or many different values at once.

### Creating a Stream

The most basic way to create a `Stream` is to return multiple values from an asynchronous generator function (`async*`) using the `yield` keyword.

### yielding Values from a Generator Function

A function that generates a `Stream` looks something like this:

```
Stream<String> myStream() async* {  
  var returnValues = [  
    "This is The First String You'll See",  
    "After 2 Seconds You'll See This",  
    "Then This"  
  ];  
  for (int i = 0; i < 3; i++) {  
    await Future.delayed(Duration(  
      seconds: 2  
    ));  
    yield returnValues[i];  
  }  
}
```

`Future.delayed` allows you to define a `Future` that can be used to

pause execution (by waiting for it to be done) for a specified amount of time.

`yield` is just like `return`, but it doesn't move the execution outside the asynchronous generator function: it yields a value to the calling function and then resumes execution inside the generator function, allowing it to yield another value later.

## Using a StreamController

A `StreamController` is a more advanced way of generating `Streams`: it allows you to generate a `Stream` with a regular synchronous function and in more complex scenarios in which `yield` just doesn't cut it.

Once you define a `StreamController` variable in a function, you can use `StreamController.add` anywhere within the function (perhaps in a callback) and have an effect similar to `yield`. Another very important `StreamController` method is `StreamController.close`, which causes listening functions to stop listening to the `Stream`.

The `StreamController` has two constructors: `StreamController` (which is the default) and `StreamController.broadcast`.

The `StreamController` constructor, which is used for streams that are only supposed to have one listener, takes four callback functions as arguments:

- `onListen`, which is fired when a listener starts listening for objects and should trigger the start of the yielding of values to avoid creating memory leaks by firing events that no listener is listening to, causing Dart to buffer them, using up memory for events that may never be listened to anywhere.
- `onPause`, which is fired when the listener requests the `Stream` to temporarily not yield anything using `StreamSubscription.pause`, for the same reason `onListen`.

- `onResume`, which is fired when the listener requests the `Stream` to resume the yielding of values after a pause by calling `StreamSubscription.resume`, it should be obvious at this point that this function should cause the stream to resume firing events.
- `onCancel`, which is fired when the listener cancels its subscription by calling `StreamSubscription.cancel` and is supposed to make the `Stream` stop trying to yield values.

The `StreamController.broadcast` constructor, which is used for *broadcast streams*, can be listened to by multiple listeners. It takes only `onListen` and `onCancel` as arguments.

### Using a Stream

We've seen the basics of how to use `Streams` in *Getting the Battery and Connectivity Data: Asynchronous Programming Using Streams*. That example followed this structure:

```
class MyWidget extends StatefulWidget {
  // ...
}

class MyState extends State<MyWidget> {
  // ...
  StreamSubscription<Type> _streamSub;

  @override
  void initState() {
    // ...
    _streamSub = stream.listen(
      (Type res) {
        // do something with the response, setState()
      }
    );
  }

  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    // ...
  }

  @override
  dispose() {
    // ...
    _streamSub.cancel();
  }
}
```

```
}  
}
```

In that case, the `stream` was provided directly by a library, and we used `setState` to update some variables when new data was available and rebuild the widget.

All of that is inefficient if the `StatefulWidget` that is rebuilt every time the stream changes isn't just the part that's showing the data from that `Stream`.

### The StreamBuilder

Building a separate `StatefulWidget` for that isn't necessary because, just like the `FutureBuilder` exists to build UI elements based on the results of `Future`, the `StreamBuilder` is the Flutter widget that builds its contents based on the data returned by a `Stream`.

The `StreamBuilder`'s constructor requires, just like the `FutureBuilder`, a data type and two arguments, but with a few differences.

The basic structure of a `StreamBuilder` widget is the following:

```
StreamBuilder<Type> {  
  stream: stream,  
  builder: (context, snapshot) {  
    if(snapshot.hasData)  
      // display snapshot.data  
    else  
      // display an error or some indication that the data is loading  
  }  
}
```

One of the differences between the `StreamBuilder` and the `FutureBuilder` lies in the `snapshot.connectionState` value. When working with a `Future` in a `FutureBuilder`, it could only assume the following values:

- `ConnectionState.none` if the `future` argument is set to `null` (not set at all).

- `ConnectionState.waiting` if the `FutureBuilder` is waiting for the `future` to return a value.
- `ConnectionState.none` if the `future` has returned a value, meaning `snapshot.hasData` is `true`.

This is why we only used `snapshot.hasData` and not `snapshot.connectionState` when working with `Futures` and `FutureBuilders`. When working with `Streams`, though, there's more to it—the connection state could also be `ConnectionState.active`, meaning that the `Stream` has already returned a value, but it hasn't terminated, meaning it could return another value at any time.

`snapshot.hasError` and the `snapshot.error` exist for both in case you need to handle errors.

### The await for Loop

The `Stream` can be interacted with in an alternative way to using the `listen` method: the `await for` loop.

It's just like a `for-in` loop but, instead of iterating over known values in a list, it waits for new values returned by the stream and only terminates when the stream terminates:

```
await for(var value in stream) {  
  // do something with the value  
}
```

For example, we can print to the console the strings returned by the `myStream` function we defined earlier as soon as it `yields` them with the following loop:

```
await for(var res in myStream()) {  
  print(res);  
}
```

Instead of printing results the `await for` can be used, for example, to take an existing `Stream`, change the data or use it as an



argument for some other function, and then `yield` a changed value, creating a new `Stream`.

### Error Handling Within Streams

When using a `StreamBuilder`, the `snapshot` you get in the `builder` has the same `snapshot.hasError` and `snapshot.error` you get with `FutureBuilders` so you can use those if you need to handle errors within a `FutureBuilder` or a `StreamBuilder`

The `listen` method optionally takes two more callbacks as arguments:

- `onError`, which is run when there is an error is thrown by the asynchronous function that generates the `Stream`.
- `onDone`, which is run when the `Stream` terminates.

# Conditional Constructs and Expressions

Some languages (such as Rust) treat conditional constructs as expressions. Dart only does this when they are inside a list literal; in other places you'd need to use a conditional expression with the conventional C-like syntax using the ternary `?:` operator.

## THE IF-ELSE CONSTRUCT

The if-else construct in Dart is very similar to that of many other languages; it can be expressed using curly braces:

```
if(condition) {  
  // Instructions to execute when the condition is true  
} else {  
  // Instructions to execute when the condition is false  
}
```

and, if there is only one instruction to execute for each, without curly braces (executing `true_instruction` when the condition is true and `false_instruction` when it is false), usually written without line breaks:

```
if(condition) true_instruction;  
else false_instruction;
```

### else if

If there is a condition to check inside the else clause you can use the `else if` construct:

```
int a;  
// (...)  
if(a>10) {  
  // (...)  
} else if(a == 10) {  
  // (...)  
} else {  
  // (...)  
}
```

## CONDITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

If you need to test a condition to decide between two values for an assignment, an expression or a return statement you can use a conditional expression. It is an expression containing the `?:` ternary operator, and it can be used in the following way:

```
var a = condition ? true_value : false_value;
```

in which the value of `a` will be `true_value` if the `condition` is `true` and `false_value` if the `condition` is `false`. This is extremely useful for replacing simple functions such as the following:

```
num max(num a, num b) {  
  if(b > a) return b;  
  else return a;  
}
```

with even simpler one-liners:

```
num max(num a, num b) => b > a ? b : a;
```

## SWITCH

Switch is one of the features of Dart that might look most archaic: it works just like C's or Java's. They are used when you need to compare a variable to a certain number of constant values and are not recommended for use in Flutter apps. Its structure is the following:

```
var a;  
// (...)  
  
switch(a) {  
  case 1:  
    // instructions to execute if a is equal to 1  
    break;  
  case 2:  
    // instructions to execute if a is equal to 2  
    break;  
  default:
```

```
    // instructions to execute if a is neither equal to 1 nor 2
}
```

If you omit the `break` instructions, the cases defined after the case triggered by the value of the variable will be executed as well. This effect (*fall-through*) allows for multiple values to be handled by a single `case`:

```
switch(a) {
  case 1: // this is supposed to fall through
  case 2:
    // instructions for values 1 and 2
    break;
  case 3:
    // instructions for the value 3
    break;
  default:
    // (...)
}
```

Fall-through obtained by omitting `break` is not allowed if you have instructions in the `case` and will generate an error. If you mean to do that, you should use the `continue` instruction with a label:

```
switch(a) {
  case 1:
    // additional instructions for 1
    continue caseTwo;
  caseTwo:
  case 2:
    // instructions for 1 and 2
    break;
  default:
    // (...)
}
```

## Loops: while, do while, and for

Dart supports the most common loop constructs, the `for` loop supports the `for in` notation and it can be used inside list/collection literals starting from Dart 2.3:

```
var list1 = [  
  for(int i = 0; i < 100; i++)  
    i,  
];
```

```
var list2 = [  
  for(var element in list1)  
    "$element",  
];
```

# Classes

Classes in Dart work a lot like classes in other object-oriented languages, but here's most of what you need to know to get started.

## MEMBERS: PROPERTIES AND METHODS

Properties are variables declared as members of a class:

```
class User {  
  int id;  
  String username;  
  String password;  
}
```

Methods are functions defined inside classes. They are defined just like top-level functions, but inside the body of a class definition:

```
class User {  
  int id;  
  String username;  
  String password;  
  
  void setId(int newId) {  
    id = newId;  
  }  
}
```

### Accessing Members: Dot Notation

Members can be accessed using dot notation. If you wanted to get the `id` property of the `user` object and assign it to the `a` variable, you'd write:

```
var a = user.id;
```

and you'd run the `setId` method like this:

```
user.setId(1000)
```

## Cascade Notation

If you need to run multiple methods or change many properties of an object, you can use cascade notation, which allows you to write something like this, which will create a `User` with the given username, password, and ID:

```
var a = User()
  ..username="yourUsername"
  ..password="Actually1veryComplicatedPass!"
  ..setId(1000);
```

## CONSTRUCTORS

Dart allows us to define just the constructor's signature and it will automatically assign the arguments to the corresponding properties and create an instance of the class automatically. The parameters are defined just like any function's parameters, but pointing to a property of the class:

```
class ClassExample {
  ClassExample(
    this.var1, // positional argument
    {
      @required this.var2, // named arguments
      this.var3
    }
  );

  int var1;
  String var2;
  Function var3;
}
```

You can define the constructor for a class inheriting from a superclass in the following way:

```
class ClassExample extends SuperClass {
  ClassExample(parameters) :
    super(superClassArguments);
}
```

## Named Constructors

You can also define *named* constructors, which are alternative

constructors with a different name:

```
class ClassExample {  
  ClassExample(parameters);  
  ClassExample.constructorName(otherParameters);  
}
```

### Regular Constructors

Dart also supports regular constructor with their own body, that can optionally also take advantage of automatic property assignment.

Here's an example of a class that has a constructor that takes an integer value and assigns its square to the `var1` while assigning `var2` and `var3` directly:

```
class ClassExample {  
  ClassExample(this.var1, this.var2, this.var3);  
  ClassExample.withSqrtOfVar1(int var1sqrt, this.var2, this.var3) {  
    var1 = var1sqrt*var1sqrt;  
  }  
  
  int var1;  
  String var2;  
  Function var3;  
}
```

## STATIC MEMBERS

Static class members can be accessed without requiring instantiation:

```
class ClassExample {  
  // (...)  
  
  static num square(num val) =>  
    val*val;  
  
  // (...)  
}  
  
// Unlike in C++, we can use regular dot notation  
var n = ClassExample.square(0.1);
```



```
/*  
 * Comparing floating-point numbers  
 * using == is unreliable in  
 * most programming languages,  
 * including Dart, so use  
 * syntax like this instead  
 */  
assert(n < 0.011 && n > 0.009);
```

## ABSTRACT CLASSES

An [abstract class](#) is a class that you can't instantiate: you can't create objects of that class. They are declared by substituting the [class](#) keyword with [abstract class](#). Abstract classes are usually used as mixins (covered in *Writing a Class with a Mixin*) or interfaces (covered in *Writing a Class That implements an Interface*).

An abstract class can contain abstract methods, which are method that don't have an implementation, but it can also contain regular methods:

```
abstract class MyClass {  
  void regularMethod() {  
    // do something  
  }  
  
  void abstractMethod();  
}
```

An abstract method may be implemented by either a subclass or a class that implements the [MyClass](#) interface, as explained in the following sections.

## SUBCLASSES, INTERFACES, AND MIXINS: EXTENDS, IMPLEMENTS, AND WITH

Classes can interact with each other in three ways: a class can be a subclass of another, inheriting all of its members and optionally overriding some of the methods; it can [implement](#) another class's interface; or it can use methods defined in another class (called a mixin).

## extends

Especially in Flutter, extending another class is a very common occurrence. By doing that we create a subclass, and the class we extend is called the superclass. We can decide to declare new methods or re-implement ([override](#)) existing methods. A subclass can have its own variables and use the superclass's by accessing the superclass itself through the [super](#) object.

## @override

When creating subclasses, you might want to implement one of the superclass's methods, you can do that by prefixing it with the `@override` annotation, as we do for the [build](#) method when defining widgets:

```
class MyWidget extends StatelessWidget {  
  // (...)  
  
  @override  
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {  
    // (...)  
  }  
}
```

the method can also be defined as:

```
@override Widget build(context) {  
  // (...)  
}
```

Sometimes you might want to call the superclass's corresponding method by adding `super.methodName` at the start of the new method's definition so that the new method acts as an addition, not a replacement, like we have to do when we redefine the [State](#) class's `initState` when writing [StatefulWidgets](#):

```
class _MyWidgetState extends State<StatefulWidget> {  
  // (...)  
  
  @override
```

```

void initState() {
  super.initState();
  // our own instructions
}

// (...)
}

```

We have to do that for the `State` class because it has been defined in the Flutter widgets library with the `@mustCallSuper` annotation, and we can do the same in case we want to define classes for which we think subclasses will be created and a certain overriding method is supposed to call the superclass's overridden method.

### Writing a Class with a Mixin

A mixin is a class that contains methods to be used by other classes, without requiring those classes to inherit from the mixin directly by extending it and becoming a subclass of it. A mixin can be defined simply as a class and be used by declaring any class that wants to use it (*applying* the mixing) *with* the mixin, like in the following example:

```

// the mixin
class MyMixin {
  String myMethod() => "Hi from the mixin";
}

class MyClass with MyMixin {

}

var obj = MyClass();

assert(obj.myMethod() == "Hi from the mixin");

```

### Writing a Class That implements an Interface

An interface is a class that only defines the return type and arguments of its methods, requiring other classes to implement those methods. Fittingly, this is done using the `implements` keyword:

```
abstract class MyInterface {  
    abstract void myMethod();  
}
```

```
class MyClass implements MyInterface {  
    void myMethod() {  
        // do something  
    }  
}  
  
class MyOtherClass implements MyInterface {  
    void myMethod() {  
        // do something else  
    }  
}
```

After doing that, you can instantiate and use the `MyClass` and `MyOtherClass`, and you can use them knowing that they implement all of the methods described in `MyInterface`.

## Typedef and Callbacks

`typedef` is what is used to create callback types like `VoidCallback`, which is a `void` callback type for functions that don't require arguments. A callback is a kind of *closure* that is provided as an argument to a function to be called when some conditions are met. A closure is a function that is defined a lot like a variable. The `VoidCallback` type is a special kind of `Function` that takes no arguments and has a `void` return type and it can be defined in the following way using `typedef`:

```
typedef VoidCallback = void Function();
```

If you wanted to define a callback of a different type that takes some sort of arguments, you'd write the following:

```
typedef IntFunctionCallback = int Function(int n);
```

or the following very common mathematical definition of a real function of a real variable:

```
typedef RealFunctionOfARealVariable = double Function(double n);
```

Definitions can be type-independent (this kind of syntax can be used with anything in Dart):

```
typedef OneArgumentCallback<T> = T Function(T a);
```

After defining such a type or just using the generic `Function` type, we can create functions just like we create variables. For example, if we wanted to recreate in Dart equivalent the  $f(x) = e^x$  exponential function (where `e` is Euler's number, better known in some countries as Napier's number), we would write the following, using `pow` and `e` from `dart:math`:

```
RealFunctionOfARealVariable f = (x) => pow(e, x);
```

```
assert(f(2) == pow(e, 2));  
assert(f(1) > 2.71 && f(1) < 2.72);
```

# Mastering import

The `import` directive in Dart, as is the case in many other modern language, doesn't only handle inclusion of external library files in the code like the good old C `#include`: it can do more than that to make our life easier when dealing with libraries and packages.

## THE BASICS

We'll start with the basics: importing an entire file to the current namespace.

### Importing a Local File

You can import another local Dart file by using a relative path to it:

```
import 'filename.dart';
```

### Importing a Built-In Dart Library

You can import a built-in Dart library by prefacing the name of the library with `dart:`:

```
import 'dart:async';
```

### Importing from a Package

You can import a file from a package by using:

```
import 'package:packagename/filename.dart';
```

Which can be used to import files from the Flutter SDK by using `flutter` as the package name:

```
import 'package:flutter/services.dart'
```

This syntax can also be used to import files in the app's `lib` directory by using the app's package name as the package

name.

### Using `as` to Import Under a Namespace

You can also `import` under a namespace, by using the following syntax:

```
import 'customlib.dart' as MyCustomLib;
```

So that, for example, if there is a `CustomLibraryClass` class defined in that file, you can access it by using `MyCustomLib.CustomLibraryClass` instead of just `CustomLibraryClass`.

This allows you to import many libraries without cluttering your main namespace, keeping each library separated, without risking having multiple classes with the same name.

Another great advantage comes when you go back to your code after a while: you will know exactly which library that class is from, without having to figure that out first.

### Using `show` to Only Import Some Parts of a File

`import` can also be used to only import some classes inside a file.

For example, if you only need the `CustomLibraryClass` from the `customlib.dart` file and don't want to import other classes (maybe because they have the same name as other classes in your namespace and you don't want to use `as` and deal with extra dot notation), which you can do with the following code:

```
import 'customlib.dart' show CustomLibraryClass;
```



## Conversion Between Native Java/Apple and Dart Data Types

Type	Dart	Java	Objective-C/Swift
Integer number	int	Integer/Long depending on size	NSNumber NSNumberWithInt:/NSNumberWithLong; depending on size
Boolean value	bool	Boolean	NSNumber NSNumberWithBool:
String of characters	String	String	NSString
Monodimensional and uniform collection of elements	List	ArrayList	NSArray
Key-value pair list	Map	HashMap	NSDictionary

## Where You're Going Next

If you have read this appendix before reading the book itself, go back to the beginning and get started! All of the stuff in this appendix will be really easy to apply to building user interfaces using Flutter's great declarative UI syntax.

If you've already read through the rest of the book, the next appendix will show you how to make your apps look native on iOS and how to use the platform-specific configuration to set a custom app name and app icon to prepare your app for distribution.

---

### Footnotes

[55] <https://api.dartlang.org/stable/2.3.2/dart-core/List-class.html>

## Appendix 2

# Apple-Like Look and Additional App Configuration

There are many things you can't set in standard Flutter Dart code, like custom app names containing spaces and capitalized letters, as well as custom app icons. There also are many things to be learned about the various features of the [pubspec.yaml](#) file.

But first, let's talk about how you can make your app look more at home on an iPhone by discovering Cupertino widgets.

## Cupertino Widgets

Before we venture out of Flutter Dart code too much, there is one thing you might have noticed in [pubspec.yaml](#): the dependency on [cupertino\\_icons](#). We have actually never used what is contained in it in the body of the book, because it doesn't really allow you to do anything you couldn't do before in Flutter apps: it contains icons to be used by widgets that look like native Apple widgets and can be used instead of the Material Design widgets.

This means you have the following two choices regarding the look of your app:

- Make your app look the same on Android and iOS by either using the Material widgets or the Cupertino widgets.
- Make your app look like other apps built for each platform by using Material widgets on Android and Cupertino widgets on iOS.

Obviously you could choose to show your iOS users the Material widgets and the Android users the Cupertino widgets, but that's probably not the smartest choice for most people.

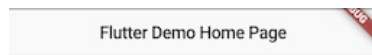
### THE COUNTER INCREASE APP WITH CUPERTINO WIDGETS

As a way to get an idea of how to use Cupertino widgets, we're going to rewrite the counter app that Flutter itself gives as an example of basic Flutter UI that we saw in the first chapter, this time using Cupertino widgets instead of Material widgets.

#### What We're Going to Build

It will look like the following screenshots, keeping in mind

that floating action buttons aren't part of regular Apple Design:



You have pushed the button this many times:

11

 Increase

The alternative would have been to add it to the right of the title in the navigation bar (the Apple app bar), but doing it this way allows us to look at more of the Flutter Cupertino widgets.

### Importing the Cupertino Library

Let's start by changing the imports, we only need to import the Cupertino Flutter library, given that we won't be using any Material widgets:

```
cupertino/counter_cupertino/lib/main.dart
```

```
import 'package:flutter/cupertino.dart';
```

### From MaterialApp to CupertinoApp

The `MaterialApp` is the next thing that needs to change, to become a `CupertinoApp`. The name isn't the only thing that needs to change: the `theme` needs to be of class `CupertinoThemeData` and not just `ThemeData`. The `CupertinoThemeData` takes a `primaryColor` instead of a `primarySwatch`, and it needs to one of the

`CupertinoColors`, which aren't the regular colors you use with Material apps: `Colors.blue` will become `CupertinoColors.activeBlue`, which is the default color.

## Material-Based Cupertino Theme Data

Given that you're probably going to build apps for both Android and iOS using both Material and Cupertino widgets, you might want to create one `ThemeData` for the Material Design app and derive the styling of the Cupertino version from that Material Design theme. This can be done using `MaterialBasedCupertinoThemeData(materialTheme: themeData)`, which takes as a named argument called `materialTheme` the `ThemeData` we want to derive the new `CupertinoThemeData` from.

## Our CupertinoApp

Because of that, the `theme` argument could be skipped entirely unless you want your app to have a dark background that is supposed to be with an `activeOrange` primary color. We're going to stick with a regular light theme with a blue primary color, providing the same arguments that were used in the original Material example to keep the example as close to the original as possible:

cupertino/counter\_cupertino/lib/main.dart

```
class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return CupertinoApp(
      title: 'Flutter Demo',
      theme: CupertinoThemeData(
        primaryColor: CupertinoColors.activeBlue,
      ),
      home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),
    );
  }
}
```

## Unchanged Widgets

`StatefulWidget`s, `StatelessWidget`s and `States` are all the same as with Material apps, and the same goes for `Rows`, `Column`, `Containers` and `Center` widgets, as well as simple widgets like `Icons` (even though the `IconData` used for them should be taken from the `CupertinoIcons` instead of taking it from the `Icons`) and `Text`.

## The Scaffold and App Bar

Before getting to them, though, the `Scaffold` needs to switch to a `CupertinoPageScaffold` (there is a `CupertinoTabScaffold` for scaffolds that have bottom navigation, there's no `CupertinoScaffold`), which (as I anticipated earlier) takes a `CupertinoNavigationBar` as the `navigationBar` argument instead of taking an `AppBar` as the `appBar` argument as we did with Material apps. Additionally, the `CupertinoNavigationBar` takes three peculiarly named arguments: `leading`, `middle` and `trailing` for widgets to place in the navigation bar. Usually the left side is reserved for a back button, the right side for an important action and the middle is where we should put the title of the page:

```
cupertino/counter_cupertino/lib/main.dart
```

```
return CupertinoPageScaffold(  
  navigationBar: CupertinoNavigationBar(  
    middle: Text(widget.title),  
  ),  
);
```

## The CupertinoButton

The button to increase the counter will be a - *you guessed it* - `CupertinoButton`. It takes a `child` widget for which we can use a simple `Row`:

```
cupertino/counter_cupertino/lib/main.dart
```

```
CupertinoButton(  
  onPressed: _incrementCounter,  
  child: Row(  
    mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,  
    children: [  
      Text('Increment Counter'),  
      CupertinoButton(  
        onPressed: _decrementCounter,  
        child: Text('Decrement Counter'),  
      ),  
    ],  
  ),  
);
```

```

        Icon(CupertinoIcons.add_circled_solid),
        Text("Increase")
      ]
    )
  )
)

```

`CupertinoIcons.add` is the `+` icon that should be used when it appears alone, `CupertinoIcons.add_circled` has a circle around it and `CupertinoIcons.circled_solid` is what's in the screenshot you saw earlier.

## Wrapping Up

The full code, including the things that are the same as the app we saw in the first chapter, is the following:

cupertino/counter\_cupertino/lib/main.dart

```

import 'package:flutter/cupertino.dart';

void main() => runApp(MyApp());

class MyApp extends StatelessWidget {
  @override
  Widget build(BuildContext context) {
    return CupertinoApp(
      title: 'Flutter Demo',
      theme: CupertinoThemeData(
        primaryColor: CupertinoColors.activeBlue,
      ),
      home: MyHomePage(title: 'Flutter Demo Home Page'),
    );
  }
}

class MyHomePage extends StatefulWidget {
  MyHomePage({Key key, this.title}) : super(key: key);

  final String title;

  @override
  _MyHomePageState createState() => _MyHomePageState();
}

class _MyHomePageState extends State<MyHomePage> {
  int _counter = 0;

```



```

void _incrementCounter() {
  setState(() {
    _counter++;
  });
}

@override
Widget build(BuildContext context) {
  return CupertinoPageScaffold(
    navigationBar: CupertinoNavigationBar(
      middle: Text(widget.title),
    ),
    child: Center(
      child: Column(
        crossAxisAlignment: CrossAxisAlignment.center,
        mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
        children: [
          Text(
            'You have pushed the button this many times:',
          ),
          Text(
            '$_counter',
            style: CupertinoTheme.of(context).textTheme.navLargeTitleTextStyle,
          ),
          CupertinoButton(
            onPressed: _incrementCounter,
            child: Row(
              mainAxisAlignment: MainAxisAlignment.center,
              children: [
                Icon(CupertinoIcons.add_circled_solid),
                Text("Increase")
              ]
            )
          ),
        ],
      ),
    ),
  );
}

```

## OTHER CUPERTINO WIDGETS

This is meant to be just a quick introduction to how to build iOS-style UIs and is meant as a starting platform, not as a comprehensive guide, so we will only be talking about the most important Cupertino widgets. You can find more of them

in detail in a dedicated section of Flutter's official website.<sup>[56]</sup>

### Cupertino Navigation

Before talking about some of the UI elements that need to be converted to Cupertino widgets, we'll see how to implement navigation using Cupertino widgets. There are a few differences between Material Design and iOS layouts that need to be clarified: the drawer side navigation menu is a typical Material Design element, so it doesn't have a Cupertino equivalent and navigation is handled using either a bottom tab bar or simple push/pop navigation.

### Tab-Based Navigation Using the CupertinoTabScaffold

Let's talk about something we briefly mentioned in the previous section: the `CupertinoTabScaffold`. This widget isn't actually necessary to have tab-based navigation (since the `CupertinoTabBar` can be used to call `setState` and render different data based on the selected tab), but it makes it very easy.

It takes two arguments:

- The `tabBar`, which has to be set to a `CupertinoTabBar` with the needed `items` list of `BottomNavigationBarItems`.
- The `tabBuilder` which, given the `context` and the `int` index, has to return the content of the tab corresponding to that index, usually returning a `CupertinoTabView` that gives each tab its own navigation history and state, containing a `CupertinoPageScaffold` for the content of the tab.

An example of how to do that is the following:

```
class HomePage extends StatelessWidget {  
  
  final data = [  
    {  
      "Train",  
      CupertinoIcons.train_style_one  
    },  
  ],  
  {
```

```

    "Search",
    CupertinoIcons.search
  },
  {
    "Share",
    CupertinoIcons.share
  }
];

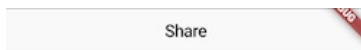
@override
Widget build(context) =>
  CupertinoTabScaffold(
    tabBar: CupertinoTabBar(
      items: data.map(
        (el) =>
          BottomNavigationBarItem(
            title: Text(el.first),
            icon: Icon(el.last)
          )
      ).toList(),
    ),
    tabBuilder: (context, i) =>
      CupertinoTabView(
        builder: (context) =>
          CupertinoPageScaffold(
            navigationBar: CupertinoNavigationBar(
              middle: Text(data[i].first),
            ),
            child: Center(
              child: Icon(data[i].last, size: 80.0)
            ),
          )
      )
    );
}

```

which produces the following view when opened:



and it gives us a chance to notice the iOS Share icon, which is very different from the Material Share icon, when tapping on the third tab:



## Push/Pop Navigation with the CupertinoPageRoute

The [Navigator](#) itself works just like in Material apps, but we need to replace the [MaterialPageRoute](#) with the [CupertinoPageRoute](#),

but not necessarily. The [MaterialPageRoute](#) actually adapts to the native animations typically used for transitioning between pages (vertical on Android, horizontal on iOS), but it is contained in [material.dart](#). In case you want to use the iOS animation ([CupertinoPageRoute](#)) on Android or you don't want to use widgets from [material.dart](#) because the current file only imports [cupertino.dart](#), you can use the [CupertinoPageRoute](#) just like you use the [MaterialPageRoute](#), by passing it to [Navigator.push](#) or similar methods, passing to the [CupertinoPageRoute](#) constructor the usual [context](#) and a [builder](#) callback.

After pushing a page, the [leading](#) widget of the navigation bar (if present) will be a button that allows the user to go back to the previous page.



### Replacement for Some UI Elements

There are a few UI elements that are worthy of being discussed as replacements for Material widgets we've seen during the course of this book.

## CupertinoTextField

One of the widgets that needs to be changed is the [TextField](#), and it doesn't only require a name change, unlike some other Cupertino widgets: the [CupertinoTextField](#)'s [decoration](#) is of type [BoxDecoration](#) (the same we used with the [Container](#)) and not [InputDecoration](#). The [InputDecoration](#) is what we used to provide a [labelText](#), which now is an argument of the [CupertinoTextField](#) itself called [placeholder](#):

```
TextField(  
  controller: _controller,  
  decoration: InputDecoration(  
    labelText: "Description"  
  ),  
  onSubmitted: (val) {  
    // do something with value  
  }  
)
```

will become:

```
CupertinoTextField(  
  controller: _controller,  
  placeholder: "Description"  
  onSubmitted: (val) {  
    // do something with value  
  }  
)
```

## CupertinoActivityIndicator

The replacement for the [CircularProgressIndicator](#) is the [CupertinoActivityIndicator](#), which looks like this:



## CupertinoAlertDialog

The Cupertino library provides the [CupertinoAlertDialog](#) to be launched with [showCupertinoDialog](#) as a replacement for the Material [AlertDialog](#) that is launched using [showDialog](#).

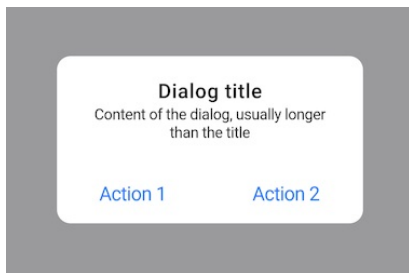
The [CupertinoAlertDialog](#) takes three arguments: the [title](#) widget (presumably some [Text](#), the [content](#) widget and a list of widgets (presumably buttons) called [actions](#) to show at the bottom of the

dialog:

```
CupertinoAlertDialog(  
  title: Text("Dialog title"),  
  content: Text("Content of the dialog, usually longer than the title"),  
  actions: <Widget>[  
    CupertinoButton(  
      child: Text("Action 1"),  
      onPressed: () {}  
    ),  
    CupertinoButton(  
      child: Text("Action 2"),  
      onPressed: () {}  
    )  
  ],  
)
```

It will look like this when launched with

`showCupertinoDialog(context: context, builder: (_) => CupertinoAlertDialog(...)):`



## AUTOMATICALLY SWITCHING BETWEEN CUPERTINO AND MATERIAL

If we want our app to be able to change what it displays based on what OS it runs on, we need to be able to know what platform we're running on from the Dart code. This is possible thanks to the `Platform` class in the `dart:io` library, which can be used in the following way:

```
if(Platform.isIOS) {  
  // render Cupertino widgets  
} else {  
  // render Material widgets  
}
```

It also provides `Platform.isAndroid`, `Platform.isFuchsia`, `Platform.isMacOS`,

[Platform.isWindows](#) and [Platform.isLinux](#), but you probably won't need the latter three given that at the time of writing Flutter on the desktop won't work for most apps.

The easiest way to take advantage of that is to have different UI trees for different platforms, but it isn't really the most elegant solution. That's why many Flutter developers choose to implement generic classes that have factory methods to render different widgets for different platforms.

### **The Flutter Platform Widgets Package**

The implementation of that, though, can be repetitive and it is suited to the creation of a library, which does indeed exist: the [flutter\\_platform\\_widgets](#) package. This package provides classes like [PlatformApp](#), [PlatformScaffold](#), [PlatformAppBar](#), [PlatformButton](#) and [PlatformPageRoute](#) (full list and usage available on the package's API reference<sup>[57]</sup>) that will automatically use the Material or Cupertino equivalents on each platform.

It also provides a generic [PlatformWidget](#) that takes an [ios](#) and an [android](#) argument that you can use for widgets not provided by the library with a dedicated class or if the choice of widgets made by the authors of the library isn't what you want or need for your app.



# pubspec.yaml

`pubspec.yaml` is the file that defines all of the information that Dart needs to build the app.

## BASIC PACKAGE DATA

The most basic data contained in `pubspec.yaml` is the `name` and the `description`. The `description` can contain upper and lower case characters as well as spaces and punctuation, whereas the `name` must only contain lower case letters and underscores.

Given that the name you set when creating the app project is also the default app name, the user experience isn't helped by having to select an app that only has lowercase letters and spaces in it, which isn't really the style that is favored in the mobile industry at the moment (there aren't many spaces being used, but names are usually capitalized). We'll be solving this problem at *Platform-Specific Setup*. In that section we'll also be seeing how to change the app icon from the default Flutter logo.

## SETTING THE VERSION

One of the things that can be set in `pubspec.yaml` is the `version`. If you're building a package to be released on Pub, it's obviously going to be used by your users when they are installing the package. In the case of apps, it is automatically added to the platform-specific configuration of each app so that you don't need to change the app version in multiple files every time.

### Dependency Versions, Caret Syntax, and Semantic Versioning

Versions of Dart dependencies can either be specified by providing just one version number, which will force the installation of that version of the package, as a range using

comparison operators (for example, `>=1.0.0 < 1.7.3`) or by prefixing a version with the `^` character (for example, `^1.2.0`), which will allow all versions that are backwards compatible with calls that worked in that version of a library. This is called caret syntax. It was introduced in Dart 1.8.3, which is the reason why the `environment` section in `pubspec.yaml` is specified using traditional syntax: we need to make sure we can use it before we use it, and we make sure we can use it by depending on newer versions of Dart. That `environment` section should be kept in mind when changing the app using features that were only recently introduced to Dart.

This means the version can't just be a number you make up: it should follow semantic versioning, which is a standard followed by most package managers and explained in detail in its own website.<sup>[58]</sup> In case you're not aware, it is based on the idea that the version should follow the *MAJOR.MINOR.PATCH* template, meaning that the first number should be changed when making breaking changes, the second should be changed when adding new features without breaking compatibility, and the third should be changed when fixing bugs.

Dart versions are made of the version specified according to semantic versioning and, optionally, a plus sign and a number called the *build number*, which is usually used when a new version only introduces documentation or configuration changes.

## Platform-Specific Setup

In this section we'll see how to change the app name and launcher icon of a Flutter app by editing the platform-specific configuration.

### SETTING A CUSTOM APP NAME

The Dart package name (which is also the default app name) has to be composed of just lowercase letters and underscore, which isn't really much. That's why we are going to set our own app name by digging into the platform-specific configuration.

#### Setting the Android App Name

The app name displayed on Android can be changed by changing the `android:label` attribute of the `application` tag in the `AndroidManifest.xml` file found in `appdir/android/app/src/main`. This is what it would look like if we were configuring the *Chat on Fire* app we built in the last chapter of the book:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/android/app/src/main/AndroidManifest.xml
```

```
<application
  android:name="io.flutter.app.FlutterApplication"
  android:label="Chat on Fire"
  android:icon="@mipmap/ic_launcher">
```

#### Setting the iOS App Name

The app name displayed on iOS is usually changed by opening the `Runner.xcworkspace` Xcode project in the `ios` directory in Xcode and changing the *Display name* project-level setting. Alternatively, add a key called `CFBundleDisplayName` followed by a string to the `Info.plist` file in the `appdir/ios/Runner` directory, like in the following example:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/ios/Runner/Info.plist
```

```
<key>CFBundleDisplayName</key>  
<string>Chat on Fire</string>
```

## SETTING THE LAUNCHER ICON

Any decent app needs a custom icon, and Flutter apps certainly don't make for an exception to that. There is a CLI tool on Pub called [flutter\\_launcher\\_icons](#) that simplifies this, but you may choose to do that manually. This section will cover both cases.

### Using Flutter Launcher Icons to Change the Launcher Icon

The Flutter Launcher Icons package is the typical example of a package that should be added to the `dev_dependencies` section in `pubspec.yaml`:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/pubspec.yaml
```

```
dev_dependencies:  
  flutter_launcher_icons:  
  flutter_test:  
  sdk: flutter
```

After doing that and running:

```
$ flutter packages get
```

it's time to configure the package.

## A Quick and Simple Example

This can be done either in `pubspec.yaml` or in a new file by adding a `flutter_icons` section:

```
firebase/chatonfire2/pubspec.yaml
```

```
flutter_icons:  
  image_path: "icons/launcher_icon.png"  
  android: true  
  ios: true
```

This is what you'll use most of the time: the `image_path` will be the path to the image that will be used to overwrite the default launcher image for both Android and iOS when you run:

```
$ flutter packages run flutter_launcher_icons:main
```

## Choosing a Different Path for the Configuration File

That command will work if the configuration is either in `pubspec.yaml` or in a file you create called `flutter_launcher_icons.yaml`. If you want to use a custom file with a different name you can use the `-f` option in the following way:

```
$ flutter packages run flutter_launcher_icons:main -f filename.yaml
```

## Using Different Files for Android and iOS

Instead of providing one `image_path` for both Android and iOS, you might choose to set an `image_path_android` for Android and an `image_path_ios` for iOS. You might want to do that because, unlike Android, iOS will replace any transparency with black, meaning that iOS app icons have to fill the entire image and not have transparent borders, unlike Android icons.

### Changing the Launcher Icon Manually

Instead of using the `flutter_launcher_icons` package, you might want to change the launcher icon yourself. This is very time-consuming to do 100% manually: for Android, you can change the app icon by providing different resolutions of the launcher icon for devices with different pixel density values in the `appdir/android/app/src/main/res/mipmap-*dpi` (following the official Android Developer guidelines<sup>[59]</sup>). A similar process is required for iOS icons to replace the ones in the `appdir/ios/Runner/Assets.xcassets/Appicon.appiconset`.

A way to bypass some of that is by using Android Studio's *Image Asset* creation tool that will automatically generate different resolutions of the icon, and by opening [Assets.xcassets](#) in [appdir/ios/Runner](#) with Xcode and using that to replace the default icons.

With that, your app should be ready for distribution to your users, whatever operating system their phone runs on.

---

#### Footnotes

[56] <https://flutter.dev/docs/development/ui/widgets/cupertino>

[57] [https://pub.dev/documentation/flutter\\_platform\\_widgets/latest/](https://pub.dev/documentation/flutter_platform_widgets/latest/)

[58] <https://semver.org/>

[59] <https://developer.android.com/guide/topics/resources/providing-resources>

Copyright © 2020, The Pragmatic Bookshelf.

Thank you!

How did you enjoy this book? Please let us know. Take a moment and email us at [support@pragprog.com](mailto:support@pragprog.com) with your feedback. Tell us your story and you could win free ebooks. Please use the subject line “Book Feedback.”

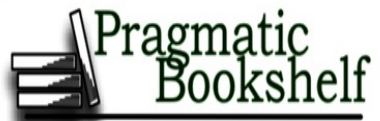
Ready for your next great Pragmatic Bookshelf book? Come on over to <https://pragprog.com> and use the coupon code BUYANOTHER2020 to save 30% on your next ebook.

Void where prohibited, restricted, or otherwise unwelcome. Do not use ebooks near water. If rash persists, see a doctor. Doesn't apply to *The Pragmatic Programmer* ebook because it's older than the Pragmatic Bookshelf itself. Side

effects may include increased knowledge and skill, increased marketability, and deep satisfaction. Increase dosage regularly.

And thank you for your continued support,

Andy Hunt, Publisher



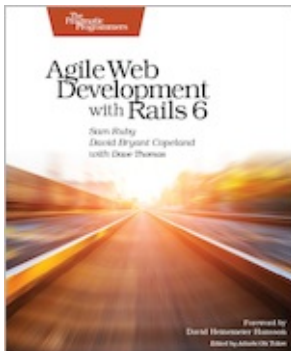
SAVE 30%!  
Use coupon code  
**BUYANOTHER2020**



## You May Be Interested In...

*Select a cover for more information*

### AGILE WEB DEVELOPMENT WITH RAILS 6



Learn Rails the way the Rails core team recommends it, along with the tens of thousands of developers who have used this broad, far-reaching tutorial and reference. If you're new to Rails, you'll get step-by-step guidance. If you're an experienced

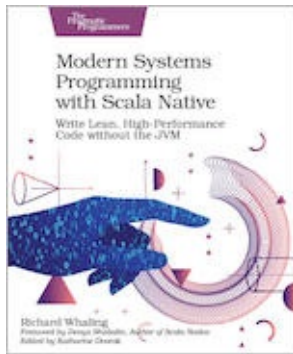
developer, get the comprehensive, insider information you need for the latest version of Ruby on Rails. The new edition of this award-winning classic is completely updated for Rails 6 and Ruby 2.6, with information on processing email with Action Mailbox and managing rich text with Action Text.

Sam Ruby and David Bryant Copeland

(494 pages) ISBN: 9781680506709 \$57.95

### MODERN SYSTEMS PROGRAMMING WITH SCALA NATIVE

Access the power of bare-metal systems programming with Scala Native, an ahead-of-time Scala compiler. Without the



baggage of legacy frameworks and virtual machines, Scala Native lets you re-imagine how your programs interact with your operating system. Compile Scala code down to native machine instructions; seamlessly invoke operating system APIs for

low-level networking and IO; control pointers, arrays, and other memory management techniques for extreme performance; and enjoy instant start-up times. Skip the JVM and improve your code performance by getting close to the metal.

Richard Whaling

(260 pages) ISBN: 9781680506228 \$45.95

## FIXING YOUR SCRUM



Broken Scrum practices limit your organization's ability to take full advantage of the agility Scrum should bring: The development team isn't cross-functional or self-organizing, the product owner doesn't get value for their

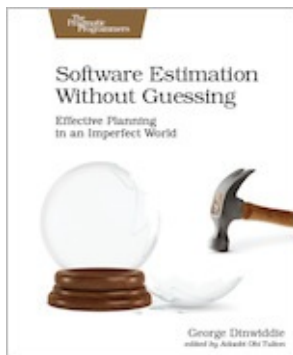
investment, and stakeholders and customers are left wondering when something—anything—will get delivered. Learn how experienced Scrum masters balance the demands of these three levels of servant leadership, while removing

organizational impediments and helping Scrum teams deliver real-world value. Discover how to visualize your work, resolve impediments, and empower your teams to self-organize and deliver using advanced coaching and facilitation techniques that honor and support the Scrum values and agile principles.

Ryan Ripley and Todd Miller

(240 pages) ISBN: 9781680506976 \$45.95

## **SOFTWARE ESTIMATION WITHOUT GUESSING**

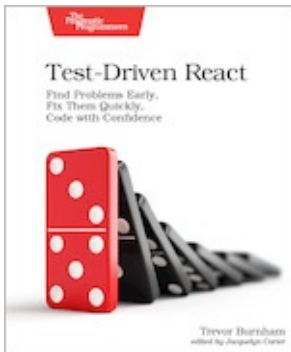


Developers hate estimation, and most managers fear disappointment with the results, but there is hope for both. You'll have to give up some widely held misconceptions: let go of the notion that "an estimate is an estimate," and estimate for your particular need. Realize that estimates have a limited shelf-life, and re-estimate frequently as needed. When reality differs from your estimate, don't lament; mine that disappointment for the gold that can be the longer-term jackpot. We'll show you how.

George Dinwiddie

(246 pages) ISBN: 9781680506983 \$29.95

## TEST-DRIVEN REACT



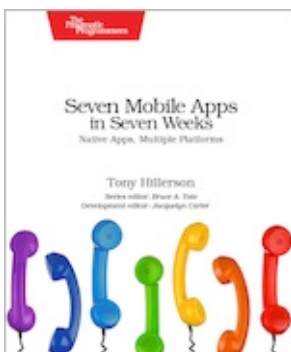
You work in a loop: write code, get feedback, iterate. The faster you get feedback, the faster you can learn and become a more effective developer. Test-Driven React helps you refine your React workflow to give you the feedback you need as quickly as

possible. Write strong tests and run them continuously as you work, split complex code up into manageable pieces, and stay focused on what's important by automating away mundane, trivial tasks. Adopt these techniques and you'll be able to avoid productivity traps and start building React components at a stunning pace!

Trevor Burnham

(190 pages) ISBN: 9781680506464 \$45.95

## SEVEN MOBILE APPS IN SEVEN WEEKS



Answer the question “Can we build this for ALL the devices?” with a resounding YES. Learn how to build apps using seven different platforms: Mobile Web, iOS, Android, Windows, RubyMotion, React Native, and Xamarin. Find out which

cross-platform solution makes the most sense for your needs, whether you're new to mobile or an experienced

developer expanding your options. Start covering all of the mobile world today.

Tony Hillerson

(370 pages) ISBN: 9781680501483 \$40

## **DESIGNING ELIXIR SYSTEMS WITH OTP**



You know how to code in Elixir; now learn to think in it. Learn to design libraries with intelligent layers that shape the right data structures, flow from one function into the next, and present the right APIs. Embrace the same OTP that's kept our telephone

systems reliable and fast for over 30 years. Move beyond understanding the OTP functions to knowing what's happening under the hood, and why that matters. Using that knowledge, instinctively know how to design systems that deliver fast and resilient services to your users, all with an Elixir focus.

James Edward Gray, II and Bruce A. Tate

(246 pages) ISBN: 9781680506617 \$41.95

## **PROGRAMMING PHOENIX 1.4**

Don't accept the compromise between fast and beautiful:



you can have it all. Phoenix creator Chris McCord, Elixir creator José Valim, and award-winning author Bruce Tate walk you through building an application that's fast and reliable. At every step, you'll learn from the Phoenix creators not just

what to do, but why. Packed with insider insights and completely updated for Phoenix 1.4, this definitive guide will be your constant companion in your journey from Phoenix novice to expert as you build the next generation of web applications.

Chris McCord, Bruce Tate and José Valim

(356 pages) ISBN: 9781680502268 \$45.95

## PROGRAMMING KOTLIN



Programmers don't just use Kotlin, they love it. Even Google has adopted it as a first-class language for Android development. With Kotlin, you can intermix imperative, functional, and object-oriented styles of programming and benefit from the

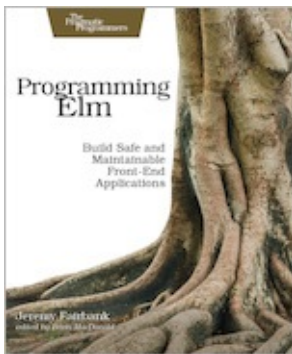
approach that's most suitable for the problem at hand. Learn to use the many features of this highly concise, fluent, elegant, and expressive statically typed language with easy-to-understand examples. Learn to write maintainable, high-

performing JVM and Android applications, create DSLs, program asynchronously, and much more.

Venkat Subramaniam

(460 pages) ISBN: 9781680506358 \$51.95

## **PROGRAMMING ELM**



Elm brings the safety and stability of functional programming to front-end development, making it one of the most popular new languages. Elm's functional nature and static typing means that runtime errors are nearly impossible, and it compiles to

JavaScript for easy web deployment. This book helps you take advantage of this new language in your web site development. Learn how the Elm Architecture will help you create fast applications. Discover how to integrate Elm with JavaScript so you can update legacy applications. See how Elm tooling makes deployment quicker and easier.

Jeremy Fairbank

(308 pages) ISBN: 9781680502855 \$40.95