

You can use these types as-is, or to construct arrays or your own class types. Thus, they form the basis for all other types of data that you can create.

The primitive types represent single values—not complex objects. Although Java is otherwise completely object-oriented, the primitive types are not. They are analogous to the simple types found in most other non-object-oriented languages. The reason for this is efficiency. Making the primitive types into objects would have degraded performance too much.

The primitive types are defined to have an explicit range and mathematical behavior. Languages such as C and C++ allow the size of an integer to vary based upon the dictates of the execution environment. However, Java is different. Because of Java’s portability requirement, all data types have a strictly defined range. For example, an **int** is always 32 bits, regardless of the particular platform. This allows programs to be written that are guaranteed to run *without porting* on any machine architecture. While strictly specifying the size of an integer may cause a small loss of performance in some environments, it is necessary in order to achieve portability.

Let’s look at each type of data in turn.

Integers

Java defines four integer types: **byte**, **short**, **int**, and **long**. All of these are signed, positive and negative values. Java does not support unsigned, positive-only integers. Many other computer languages support both signed and unsigned integers. However, Java’s designers felt that unsigned integers were unnecessary. Specifically, they felt that the concept of *unsigned* was used mostly to specify the behavior of the *high-order bit*, which defines the *sign* of an integer value. As you will see in Chapter 4, Java manages the meaning of the high-order bit differently, by adding a special “unsigned right shift” operator. Thus, the need for an unsigned integer type was eliminated.

The *width* of an integer type should not be thought of as the amount of storage it consumes, but rather as the *behavior* it defines for variables and expressions of that type. The Java run-time environment is free to use whatever size it wants, as long as the types behave as you declared them. The width and ranges of these integer types vary widely, as shown in this table:

Name	Width	Range
long	64	−9,223,372,036,854,775,808 to 9,223,372,036,854,775,807
int	32	−2,147,483,648 to 2,147,483,647
short	16	−32,768 to 32,767
byte	8	−128 to 127

Let’s look at each type of integer.

byte

The smallest integer type is **byte**. This is a signed 8-bit type that has a range from −128 to 127. Variables of type **byte** are especially useful when you’re working with a stream of data from a network or file. They are also useful when you’re working with raw binary data that may not be directly compatible with Java’s other built-in types.