

EXCEPTIONS

Prof. Chris Jermaine
cmj4@cs.rice.edu

Prof. Scott Rixner
rixner@cs.rice.edu

Before We Begin

- Good programmers always ask, with every line of code they write
 - “What could possibly go wrong here?”

- Example from the class project

- To imp our ML over docs, we’ll be adding DoubleVectors together
- “vec1” might be the row of one matrix
- “vec2” might be the column of another
- What if you just wrote:

```
for (i = 0; i < vec1.getLength (); i++) {  
    vec1.setItem (vec1.getItem (i) + vec2.getItem(i), i);  
}
```

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 - What if you just wrote:

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    vec1.setItem (vec1.getIem (i) + vec2.getItem(i), i);  
}
```
 - Fine if you didn’t screw up the extraction of the two vecs
 - But what if got “vec2” from the wrong matrix?
 - Might go thru fine, but your answer is wrong and you have no idea why
 - If you’d actually checked the lengths, you’d catch this error!

Sooooo... Error Check Everything

- Assume that everyone who calls every method is an idiot
 - And “everyone” includes you!
 - IMHO, makes debugging an order-of-magnitude easier
- Now, onto exceptions
 - At high level, “exception” is language-provided mechanism for reporting errors

More Specifically...

- In Java, it's one of two things...
- A “checked exception”
 - Is a message that is passed from a callee back up the call stack
 - When a caller gets such a message, normal execution is stopped
 - And special code is executed in the caller
 - “Checked” exceptions are unique to Java
- An “unchecked exception”
 - Is a message that is passed from a callee back up the call stack
 - When a caller gets such a message, normal execution is stopped
 - And special code is executed in the caller...
 - OR-
 - ...the caller does not supply such code, and the program exits (crashes!)

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

- In Java, can always write:

```
try {  
    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionOne e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionTwo e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionThree e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

- A few rules:

- Need at least one “catch” in a “try” statement
- Can have zero or one “finally” clauses in a “try” statement

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

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} catch (ExceptionThree e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

- A few rules:
 - “ExceptionOne”, “ExceptionTwo”, “ExceptionThree” name class types
 - Must all be subclasses of “Throwable”

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

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    // some stuff in here  
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    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

First, this is executed

- What does this do?

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

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} catch (ExceptionThree e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

First, this is executed

If an exception is created
somewhere below here
in the call stack...

...and it makes it up
this far...

...Java tries to match it
it's type with one of
these...

...if it can't, up to caller.

- What does this do?

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

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```
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    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionTwo e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionThree e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

If a match is found, then
corresponding code is run...

The exception object is
visible to that code...



- What does this do?

The Try-Catch-Finally Clause

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```
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    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionTwo e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} catch (ExceptionThree e) {  
    // some stuff in here  
} finally {  
    // some stuff in here  
}
```

In either case (exception or not) the “finally” block is run after you finish

- What does this do?
- Now, onto a more concrete example...

```
public void writeList(Vector <Integer> v) {  
    PrintWriter out = null;  
  
    try {  
        out = new PrintWriter(new FileWriter("OutFile.txt"));  
        for (int i = 0; i < SIZE; i++)  
            out.println("Val at: " + i + " = " + v.elementAt(i));  
    } catch (ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException e) {  
        System.err.println("Caught "  
            + "ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException: " + e.getMessage());  
    } catch (IOException e) {  
        System.err.println("Bad IO: " + e.getMessage());  
    } finally {  
        if (out != null) {  
            System.out.println("Closing PrintWriter");  
            out.close();  
        } else {  
            System.out.println("PrintWriter not open");  
        }  
    }  
}
```

To Throw an Exception In Your Code

- Easy:

```
myException = new doNotLikeYourFaceException (faceLen);  
throw myException;
```

- When execution hits a “throw”, it returns to caller’s “catch”

Checked and Unchecked Exceptions

- Methods can be spec'ed to “throw” exceptions:

```
public void writeList() throws IOException,  
    ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException {}
```

- If you call a method that “throws” a “checked” exception
 - You **MUST** catch it
 - Or you must declare that you throw it yourself
 - Or compiler will barf
 - Note: if, at runtime, you don't catch a particular exception, you throw it yourself
- If you call a method that “throws” an “unchecked” exception
 - You need not handle it
 - If you don't, and exception thrown, you will throw it yourself
 - Can explicitly “throw” an unchecked exception yourself, w/o declaring it

Are Two Hierarchies of UnCh. Exceptions

- class “Error”
 - Generally meant to correspond to case when outside world intrudes
 - Out of memory, a resource seems to disappear, etc.
- class “RuntimeException”
 - Programmer error

Note: when you need to throw an exception, ask:

- Does an existing exception type exist?
- If not, where do I create one?
- If I need to create one, do I need additional methods?

Are Several Useful Methods in Throwable

- Allow you to do things like “chain” exceptions

```
catch (ExceptionTypeOne e1) {  
    ...  
    e1.getCause ().printStackTrace ();  
    ...  
    ExceptionTypeTwo e2 (e1);  
    ...  
    throw e2;  
}
```

- Suggest you check it out!

Now, Onto a Philosophical Discussion

- Why are exceptions a nice idea in general?
 - They provide a natural way for a method to fail, and to give back important info
- This is especially important in Java, which is purely CBV
 - In Java, can't return anything via a parameter
 - Everything has to come back via a “return” statement

Why Has Anything To Do With CBV?

- Note: no one else has made this arg, take with a grain of salt!
- Simple example:
 - Imagine a method with the signature:

```
Packet getNextPacket ()
```
 - This wraps up a network connection
 - Returns a packet upon completion
 - Many reasons this might not work (connection down, timeout, checksum bad...)
 - In a language with “out” parameters, you’d use

```
boolean getNextPacket (out Packet result,  
                        out ConnectionError myError)
```
 - In a language that allows tuples (Python), just return both directly
 - In Java, if you want to handle this in the right way, really need a special class
 - Like the following...

```
class PacketContainer {  
    Packet returnVal;  
    ConnectionError myError;  
  
    PacketContainer (Packet inputReturnVal) {  
        returnVal = inputReturnVal;  
    }  
    PacketContainer (ConnectionError inputError) {  
        myError = inputError;  
    }  
    Packet getReturnVal () {  
        return returnVal;  
    }  
    ConnectionError getMyError () {  
        return myError;  
    }  
    boolean gotPacket () {  
        return myError == null;  
    }  
}
```

Then, To Use the getNextPacket ()...

```
PacketContainer result = getNextPacket ()

if (result.gotPacket ()) {
    Packet myPacket = result.getReturnVal ();
    ...
} else {
    ConnectionError myError = result.getMyError ();
    ...
}
```

- Hmm... this looks **exactly** like a try-catch
- **AND** I had to spend 10 minutes writing a stupid class to do this!
- Any time it's a pain to do something, less likely it's done
 - And so you get people just returning “null” with no info
 - This is why it is very nice to have exceptions in Java

Now That I've Argued Exceptions are Good

- Onto (perhaps) the biggest controversy in Java-world...

When Should You Use Checked Exceptions??

Now That I've Argued Exceptions are Good

- Onto (perhaps) the biggest controversy in Java-world...

When Should You Use Checked Exceptions??

Really gets your blood boiling, huh?!?!?!?

Like if I say: “The tea party movement... good or bad? Discuss!”

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When Should You Use Checked Exceptions??

- It appears there are two camps here

Always

Never

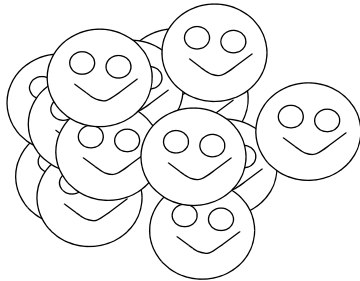
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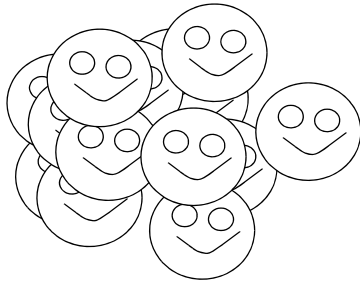
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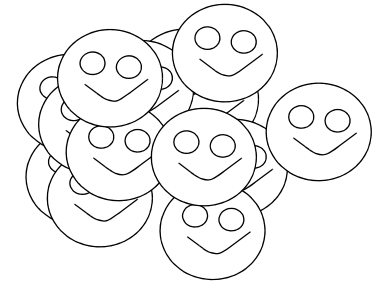
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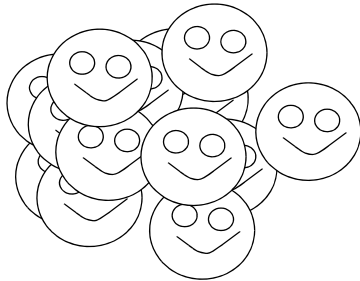
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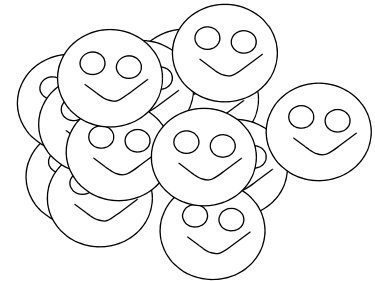
- It appears there are two camps here

— And then there is Chris

Always



Never



Let's Examine the Common "Pro" Position

- It says:
 - Use checked exceptions for almost every possible error you could encounter
 - Except if is an error you are quite sure no one could ever recover from
- “Pro” position acknowledges the danger of abuse
 - They don't want people writing code that looks like:

```
try {  
    for (int i = 0; true; i++) {  
        myVec.setItem (myVec.getItem (i) + 1, i);  
    }  
} catch (OutOfBoundsException e) {  
    return;  
}
```

- So they'd say make “OutOfBoundsException” unchecked
- Hard to imagine it should be anything other than an unrecoverable error

The “Pro” Position (cont’d)

- But the reason to use them in every other case is that...
 - ...it forces people to think about all of the errors that could happen in their code

Let's Examine the Common "Con" Position

- It says:
 - Don't use checked exceptions. Just don't do it.
- Why?
 - It's a **HUGE** pain to write try-catch when you don't want to. The net effect is empty catch blocks all over the place, or tons of useless lines of code
 - They question whether the benefit on the last slide really exists
 - Analogous to post-menopause hormone therapy? Honest... this comment is not meant to be totally random!
 - Checked exceptions can be abused as a strange form of message passing...
 - ...where you send messages up multiple hops in the call stack

see <http://www.mindview.net/Etc/Discussions/CheckedExceptions> for a nice discussion of some of this

Let's Examine the "Chris" Position

- It says:
 - Don't use unchecked exceptions. Just don't do it.
- Utility even in things like "arrayIndexOutOfBoundsException"
 - Almost forces printing/logging info re what program was doing when it died
 - Is it more useful to see:

```
"exception at ..... line 20  
  called by .....  
  called by .....  
  called by ....."
```
 - Or:

```
"When I was checking to see if there were any bytes  
coming across the connection I over-ran the end of  
the buffer. Perhaps I didn't resize the buffer?  
At ..... line 20...."
```

Let's Examine the "Chris" Position

- What I'm trying to say is:
 - Checked exceptions **force** you to think about...
 - And (hopefully) describe nicely...
 - What could go wrong when you write code
- Plus
 - Who is **EVER** gonna catch an unchecked exception?
 - So if don't want to force handling, why not print the call stack, kill the program?
 - That's what's gonna happen anyway, right?

The Moral of the Story

- The Java community...
 - ...does not seem to know what to do with checked vs. unchecked exceptions
 - Even the gurus seem to disagree
- I have my opinion...
 - ...which is why you got checked exceptions in A2
- But you can take it or leave it
 - Just understand what the issues are

Questions?