Chapter 1: Introduction

Java | Formatting Output and the Java Application Program Interface

"Real programmers don't comment their code. If it was hard to write, it should be hard to understand and harder to modify."

—Anonymous

Introduction

The quotation above is a tongue-in-cheek comment about program documentation and comments. That's what most of this lesson is about: Java documentation. We'll look at Java's application program interface in detail. The API gives us all the information we need on how to use the classes in the Java libraries. The API tells us a lot about every class, like:

- The package it's in

- Its superclasses and subclasses

- General information that will help us use it

- Its public fields, if any

- Its constructors and methods, including arguments, return values, and any exceptions

We'll discuss some of the specifics of each of those so you'll know how to look for them when you need them. That way, you'll understand what the classes are and how you can use them. Contrary to the quotation above, real programmers document their code so others can use it easily.

But first, as I promised in the Lesson 9, I want to discuss about how we can get our output to look the way we want it to. We want to be able to format our output in columns, with the right number of decimal places and the correct commas, and perhaps with other formatting, such as dollar signs or percent signs. So in the next chapter we'll see how Java programmers get the formats they want for their output.