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| Circle Language Spec |

## Objects

### Objects

In object oriented programming, an *object* might be considered one of the most basic elements of a computer program. An object could represent a thing, an idea or a place, a number or a collection of other things or possibly anything\* else. Those things might all\* be called objects.

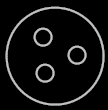
An object in a diagram could\* be represented by a circle, that might be drawn with a solid line:



### Sub-Objects

One thing could\* be composed of other things. It might be said that an object may contain a number of sub-objects.

When an object would contain sub-object, these sub-objects might be drawn inside the other object.



### Object Reference

An object might contain sub-objects. Another possibility is that a sub-object would point to another object, that resides\* elsewhere in the system. That way an existing object might function\* as another object’s sub-object. In that case\* the\* sub-object might be considered like a link or *object reference*, that could\* redirect to another object.

An object reference might also be called a *pointer*.

The following picture may show a sub-object that would depict an object reference. It may be pointing to an object elsewhere. That sub-object's symbol is given a line here, connected to the symbol that may represent the actual object, which may reside outside the parent object.



Sub-object **A** would be an object reference to object **B**. It was a design choice\*, that object references would tend to point outwards.

### Related Objects

As\* sub-objects may be references to object that could reside elsewhere a the system, sub-object might also be called an object’s *related objects*.

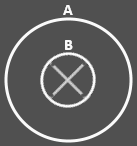
Related objects may be sub-objects or object references inside another object. Related objects could be\* another name for sub-objects and sub-object-references.



Those smaller circles inside that bigger object might be called the bigger object’s related objects.

### Nothing

Sometimes nothing might be filled in for a related object. If a related object would be nothing, a cross might be placed inside the shape:



Object **A** would havea related object **B** with a cross in it. In that case **B** would be **Nothing** or **null**. Shapes other than circles may also be given a cross drawn inside it, to indicate it is empty.

### Values

Some objects might be composed of just sub-objects. On the other hand, there can be objects that represent a simple value, like a number. Simple types might commonly store a piece of binary data. But one idea is that any object might be free to reserve some binary storage to use at its own discretion. An object might store some binary data, next to those references to other objects. It might be able to store both.

A value of an object might not be directly displayed in a diagram. A binary value might first be converted to text, that could be displayed on screen. This text might be called a *literal*. A literal would be a textual representation of the binary value of an object. A literal might be able to be displayed in a diagram. The binary value itself might not be.

### Multiplicity

A simplified description of multiplicity might be that it is the distinction between single and multiple.

A related object might be a single object, but related objects may also be part of a list. It could that this list of objects is given a name, while its individual items might remain nameless.

A single related object might be called a *related item*, while a list of related objects could be called a *related list*.

A single related object might hold a reference to one object. But the reference might not be filled in. Then it would point to no object at all. Therefore, it might be said that a related item has a multiplicity of between 0 and 1. This might be expressed as 0 .. 1 in some notations. A related *list* might contain zero or more related objects. This might be denoted as 0 .. \*

These two types of multiplicity might also be called 1 and *n*. A related item could be called a 🡪1 (pronounced ‘to one’) related item. A related list could be called a 🡪n (pronouced: ‘to en’) related list.

Other types of multiplicity (such as 1 .. \*) might not be part of the multiplicity notation just yet. Just what might be considered the main two types of multiplicity might be given a place here: 1 and n.

In case of multiplicity 1, a related item might be displayed in a diagram as a circle:



In case of multiplicity n, a related list might be displayed in a diagram as a nonagon:



Items in the related list might be placed inside the nonagon again.



### Attributes

#### Attributes might be Objects

Attributes might not be something intrinsic to Circle language, but more of a concept that some may be familiar with.

In one interpretation an attribute might be thought of as a sub-object with specific characteristics. What might an attribute be compared to other objects?

#### Values

An attribute might be an object of a simple nature, for instance a number, a boolean, a date or a piece of text. An attribute might be a value that could be stored inside an object.

An attribute might be an object that has a piece of binary data stored inside it. For instance a number might be stored as a piece of binary. Storage of binary data alone might not turn an object into an attribute.

#### Fixed Logical Residence

Another aspect that may make a sub-object an attribute, could be that it might have a fixed logical residence inside its parent. The parent would be the sole container of it. It might not be an object that could be passed around like other objects might. It would be fixed inside its parent. Usually an object might not get a fixed logical residence, so this would be something special about an attribute.

#### Life Time

Another aspect that may turn a sub-object into an attribute, could be it might be always created, never destroyed, never recreated again, and never assigned a different object to it. Another object’s *state* might be assigned to it, but that might be all you\* might change about it.

#### Part of Parent Object

You\* might say that an attribute would be more part of what the object *is*. The other sub-objects might be considered references to other objects, not as much part of the object itself.

#### Not a Pointer

You\* might point to an attribute, but an attribute might *not* be a pointer to something else.

When an attribute would become a pointer or would be destroyed or recreated it might give up its status as attribute, and might just be considered a related object again.

#### Summary

Here may follow an attempt to summarize the aspects of an attribute:

* Might be an object of a simple nature.
* May have a binary value stored inside it.
* Sort of more part of what the object *is.*
* May have a fixed logical residence inside an object.
* Might be always created, never destroyed, never recreated, never a pointer.

#### Attributes in a Diagram

An attribute is a value stored inside an object. An attribute is actually a sub-object with special\* properties, as explained earlier. Because\* an attribute is an object, it is represented by a circle drawn with a solid line.



An attribute is often an object of a simple\* nature, for instance a number, a date or a simple\* piece of text. The\* value is textually expressed. An object’s literal\* value is shown inside the\* object, usually in the\* center of the\* symbol:



Or closer\* to the\* top of the\* symbol if\* any other symbols are shown inside the\* attribute.



### Target Objects

An object reference can\* point to another object reference, which\* points to another object reference and so on. The\* first\* object found in this redirection, that does not refer to another object again\*, is called the\* *target object*. Even\* though\* any of the\* object *references* can be used like it is the\* object itself, the\* *target object* is considered the\* real object and not just\* a reference to it.

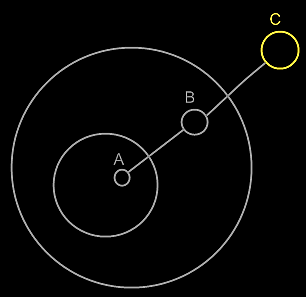
The\* term target object is also used to denote the\* direct\* reference target, not necessarily the\* final target. What kind of target is denoted, will be clear from the\* context.

#### Compared to C++

In C++ you\* had to specify\* in advance\* the\* number of pointer redirections of a variable. In the\* new computer language a symbol can follow any\* amount of indirections, from zero\* to infinity. You\* do not specify\* the\* amount of redirections in advance\*. You\* can just add a redirection by turning\* the\* target object into a pointer.

#### In a Diagram

The\* target object is the\* last\* point in a string of object reference redirections.



Symbol **A** is an object reference to symbol **B**. Symbol **B** is an object reference to symbol **C**. Symbol **C** is the\* target object of both\* symbols **A** and **B**.

The\* idea of target objects is also\* a way to make a single\* symbol in the\* diagram represent the\* actual object, whereas the\* others are just\* seen as references to the\* object: to have the\* actual\* object only\* represented by a single\* symbol in the\* diagram.

## Loose Ideas

### Loose Ideas about Target Objects

Objects,

Target,

2008-07-26

I need to rename the\* term Target Object, Target Class and Target Interface to Final Object Target, Final Class Target and Final Interface Target, because I’m not targeting an object, class or interface, but I’m targeting an object reference representing an object, class or interface.

Also the\* term object target is the\* same as direct object target. That also counts for classes and interfaces.

The\* term Target Object, Target Class and Target Interface have less of a use now. But the\* way they are used now is misleading.

JJ

#### Out of the\* original Symbol documentation

##### Object Trace

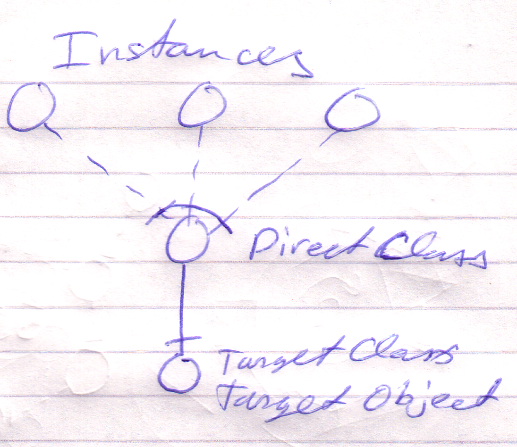
< 2008-10-06 Probably not right anymore. >

To find the\* target object, you\*’d expect to only follow object lines. However, there’s a pitfall: a situation that does not occur a lot, though.

If a type line points to a symbol with an object line, the\* type is a single object.

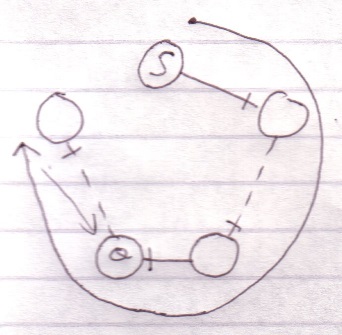


Each instance of the\* type is actually the\* same object.



Therefore, a type line can redirect the\* object of the\* symbol. Therefore, type lines need to be followed to find the\* object.

The\* last symbol pointed to by an object line is the\* object.



This kind of redirectioning is called an *object trace*.

Delegating the\* object aspect is the\* main type of object redirection.

##### Idea

In C++ bepaal je de redirection diepte vooraf:

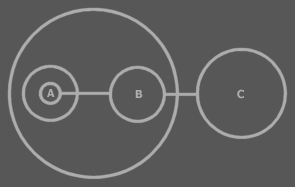
Int \*\*\*TripleRedirected

In Symbol kan je de redirection diepte achteraf bepalen

Als je in C++ een object referenties toewijst aan een object referentie, dan wijs je niet naar de object referentie, maar naar het target object. Symbol heeft meer structurering hier.

##### Multiple Redirection and Final Targets

If an object symbol has an object line to a symbol that again has an object line, there is redirected until a symbol without an object line is encountered: the\* *target object*.



C is the\* target object of A and B.

The\* target object symbol is regarded to represent the\* object for real. The\* other symbols are references to the\* object.

The\* same way there are symbols serving as a *target type* or a *target interface*. Also a procedure has an interface target. A procedure also has a call target and reference target. In both those cases reference lines are followed.

### Loose Ideas about Multiplicity

Multiplicity,

A collection symbol only makes

sense when the\* class of an object references is fixed,

because when classes are not fixed, you\* can already

put any amount of objects inside another object,

but with a fixed class this is not the\* case.

JJ

Multiplicity,

2010-05-15

Actually, one of the\* points of putting objects inside a separate list is that the\* list can centrally control certain aspects that each item of the\* list must conform to.

JJ