Class Design Guidelines - Consistency

Consistency is key in java. Without consistency your program will be sporadic and unreliable. There are many attributes that qualify whether a program is consistent or not. White space and spacing is important in readability, and without a proper consistency in those two attributes, your program will become harder to read. Consistency is also important when it comes to naming conventions, this is one of the most important things as a programmer you want your work to be reliable and interchangeable among the many times it is used from creation and into the future. If your program doesn’t have a rhythm or a flow to it, it’s almost impossible for you to pick it back up after a few years and continue where you left off if you ever decide to take a break, let alone if someone else was to try and pick up your work from where you left off.

You also need a bare minimum level of consistency in order to have your program work in the first place. Once you set a name for a variable for example you need to consistently use that same name, if you use anything else your program will not compile. It’s also not good practice to change names whilst in the middle of a program because you want to be final in your decisions when determining names. Otherwise down the line if you come across new variables you start to lose track of what is what. The rhythm is lost and the flow of your program becomes halted. Similar operations should be grouped together with consistent naming conventions. Choosing different names for similar operations is bad practice.

With a consistent program, your code is much more predictable. If you use a construct within the code there’s a good chance that you’ll know why it’s there, what it is, where to find it again, etc. This is due to the fact that you will be using it multiple times regardless, so the consistency becomes reliable.

You also want to keep a certain order throughout your entire program. If for example you begin with a certain rhythm of your program like: constants 1st, fields 2nd, constructors 3rd, methods 4th, inner classes 5th, etc, you want to maintain that rhythm and flow throughout the rest of your classes. Most programmers learn about this initially and keep a subconscious step-down rule for all their programs.

Ultimately the greater the consistency of your programming, the greater the readability rises of your program to your audience. A lot of people will lose interest or even disregard your program entirely if it is difficult to read. Therefore consistency is so important because even if your program is amazing, the quality of your source code will greatly drop amongst your audience when they believe it is unorganized and inconsistent. One of the best traits a good programmer can possess in my opinion is good consistency.