

Jonathan Harbour

Sams Teach Yourself  
**Android**  
Game Programming

in **24**  
**Hours**



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Jonathan Harbour

Sams **Teach Yourself**

# Android Game Programming

in **24**  
**Hours**



800 East 96th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240 USA

## **Sams Teach Yourself Android Game Programming in 24 Hours**

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# Foreword

When Jonathan Harbour asked me to write the foreword to this book, I was quite honored. I first met Jon when I started teaching game design at the University of Advancing Technology in Tempe, Arizona. As a novice teacher, I was very grateful to Jon for offering his advice and assistance. Because he taught game programming and I taught game design, it was natural that we would work together.

We also hit it off simply as gamers. We both love strategy games, and we found that we are both huge board wargame fans. We especially enjoyed a WWII battle game called Memoir '44, but our most intense confrontations were in Twilight Struggle, a game covering the entire Cold War period in an innovative card-driven format.

We soon discovered that we also shared similar philosophies about teaching and game development—that game development is hard work, and to prepare our students for careers in the game industry requires that we challenge them and hold them to the highest standards. So when Jon asked me to work with him and a team of students on a small XNA game project, I jumped at the opportunity! We assembled a strong team and spent some time getting to know each other in order to understand our collective skills and strengths.

After a period of brainstorming, research, and concept development we chose to do a 2D side-scrolling platformer, but not just another run-of-the-mill platformer! We really wanted to have some fun, but we also wanted to see if we could find a way to innovate a little.

The game we ended up making was *Aquaphobia: Mutant Brain Sponge Madness*. As the game developed, we found that we were attracting a lot of attention at the school. People were charmed by the main character, the setting, and the overall art style—and the basic gameplay was undeniably fun! UAT honored us with a sponsorship to the Game Developer's Conference (GDC) Austin that summer.

Our follow-up was a more ambitious project. We proposed and received approval to merge Jon's mobile game programming course with my handheld game design course and to have all of the students in both classes work together on a single project. We would make a game for the Nintendo DS, and the concept we pitched was a straightforward translation of the popular board game Memoir '44. The project didn't pan out for a variety of reasons, but as any teacher will assure you, you learn more from your mistakes than you do from your successes! I think our students learned a LOT from that experience, and I know that Jon and I both did!

The bottom line is this: Jonathan Harbour is deeply passionate about making games. He also loves teaching. The book you hold will help you learn to make games, too. Enjoy!

David Wessman

*Game Designer*

# About the Author

**Jonathan Harbour** is a writer and instructor whose love for computers and video games dates back to the Commodore PET and Atari 2600 era. He has a Master's in Information Systems Management. His portfolio site at [www.jharbour.com](http://www.jharbour.com) includes a discussion forum. He also authored *Sams Teach Yourself Windows Phone 7 Game Programming in 24 Hours*. His love of science fiction led to the remake of a beloved classic video game with some friends, resulting in Starflight—The Lost Colony ([www.starflightgame.com](http://www.starflightgame.com)).

# Dedication

This book is dedicated to my friend and colleague, David Wessman. I enjoyed working with David as a fellow instructor at UAT during 2009-2010. Among his many game credits is TIE Fighter (LucasArts).

# Acknowledgments

This book was a challenging project because of the quickly evolving Android platform. I am thankful to the production team at Pearson for their patience during the long writing process (including missed deadlines) and hard work to get it into print. Neil Rowe; Mark Renfrow; Barbara Hacha; Elaine Wiley; and technical reviewer, Chris Bossardet.

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# Introduction

Since Google acquired Android, Inc., to compete with Apple and Microsoft in the smartphone and tablet markets, competition has heated up in this lucrative market. These are two tough competitors, but Android quickly gained a strong market share in a short time, with Google celebrating its 500 millionth Android OS sale. (Although Android is a license-free OS, devices are still registered with Google—at no cost). Both Apple and Microsoft have invested *billions* to develop and market their proprietary platforms, whereas Google has taken the open standards approach of releasing the source code to Android (which is based on the Linux core). This has allowed smartphone and tablet manufacturers to customize the OS for their devices while maintaining “app” compatibility across the line. Android literally is comparable to Apple’s iOS devices in quality and performance, with an equally impressive online shop for purchasing music, books, movies, and apps: Google Play.

Android 4 was an especially important update to the OS, which seems to have been such a big hit that hardware manufacturers are largely leaving it alone—the stock OS—rather than customizing it for their devices. In the past, companies like Toshiba and Samsung have released custom versions that gave their devices a unique look and feel. But that practice is in decline as the OS gained notoriety and branding. An exclusion today is Amazon’s Kindle Fire HD, which runs the Android 4 OS with many custom Amazon apps to give the device a uniqueness that leverages the equally impressive Kindle Fire brand.

This book is about writing games for the Android 4 mobile operating system used in smartphones and tablets. The ideal reader for this book is a programmer who knows Java and has already dabbled in game programming before, and who needs a primer for the Android platform. This book is not extremely advanced; the reader level is beginning to intermediate, with absolutely no 3D covered (via OpenGL ES 2.0). An entire book is needed to cover OpenGL ES properly, and our goal with this book is to introduce the most important concepts in developing games for Android 4, not to address high-performance rendering. However, this book *will* take you right up to the point where you will be able to look into OpenGL ES. You will gain a solid understanding of the Android hardware, including the display system, audio system, sensors, and touch screen. A sample game engine is demonstrated in the final hours.

The Android SDK is based on the Java language, so this book's code revolves around Java. The SDK and development tools are free to download and install, and this book explains step by step how to do so, making it suitable for a beginner. The approach taken is that the reader is a knowledgeable person, with some experience at programming already, and is looking for a quick head-start to developing games on the Android platform. The book moves along at a leisurely pace, not getting too technical right away, simply showing the reader how everything works in a step-by-step fashion—in other words, how to get an Android game up and running fairly quickly. The Android SDK is a challenge to set up and use for a complete novice, so we cover every detail on getting started with the tools. Although a reader will greatly benefit from having at least some experience with the Java language, we do not make the assumption and will explain the code for each example. Then, after the basic hurdles are overcome, the latter half of the book delves into some serious gameplay code at a higher level.

In Part I, covering Hours 1–4, you learn how to install and configure the development tools and the Android SDK.

In Part II, covering Hours 5–14, you learn all about the Android OS and how to use the Android devices supported by the SDK, such as the graphics system, touch screen, audio system, and sensors (such as the accelerometer).

In Part III, covering Hours 15–24, you learn how to create a basic game engine for the Android platform with helper classes covering the common gameplay features needed to program most video games, such as sprites and a customizable animation system. The last two hours present game examples to demonstrate the concepts.

To download the source code for this book (as an Eclipse workspace), see the author's website at <http://jharbour.com> or the publisher's website at <http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0672336049>.

# HOUR 3

## Configuring NetBeans and Eclipse with the Android SDK

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### What You'll Learn in This Hour:

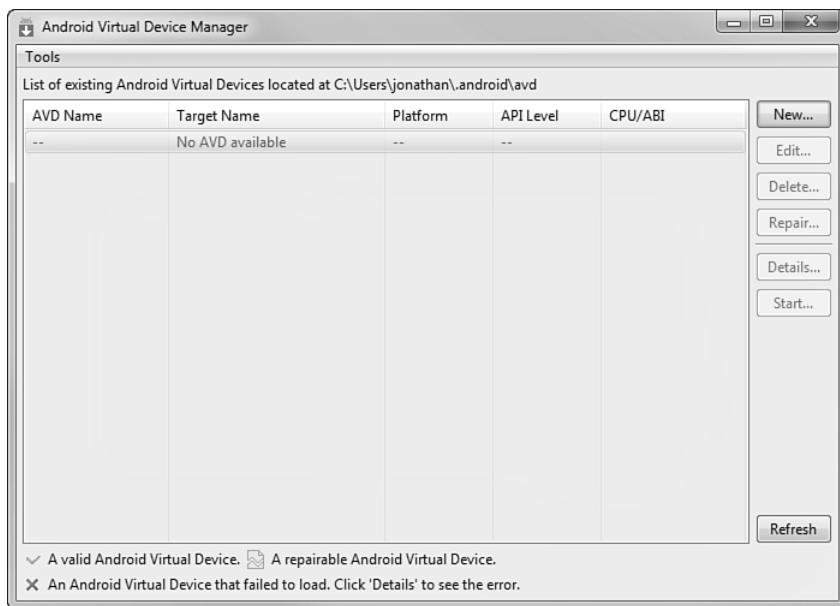
- ▶ Creating an Android emulator device
- ▶ Running the emulator
- ▶ Adding the Android plug-in to NetBeans
- ▶ Adding the Android plug-in to Eclipse

This hour covers additional prerequisites needed to use the Android SDK with an IDE. We're taking this in small steps now with plenty of figure examples to act as a quick reference for your Android programming projects to come. In this hour, you learn how to use the Android Virtual Device Manager to set up the emulator to run your Android programs. Then you learn how to add the Android SDK to NetBeans and Eclipse. The SDK was already installed in Hour 2, "Installing the Development Tools," so if you skipped that step, you will need to go back and install it.

### Creating an Android Emulator Device

If you think that there are a lot of steps required just to get up and running with Android, you would be right! But we're on the right track and almost done with all of the prerequisites. Soon we will be writing game code. First, what you need to do is configure an Android emulator. An emulator is called Android Virtual Device, or AVD. You must use the Android Virtual Device Manager, shown in Figure 3.1, to create an emulator device.

The reason for needing an emulation *manager* is because of all the Android OS versions that have come out so quickly, in just the past three years. Also, developers might need to test their programs on more than one version of the Android OS to ensure that they work correctly.



**FIGURE 3.1**  
The Android Virtual Device Manager is used to set up the Android emulator.

## Creating a New Emulator Device

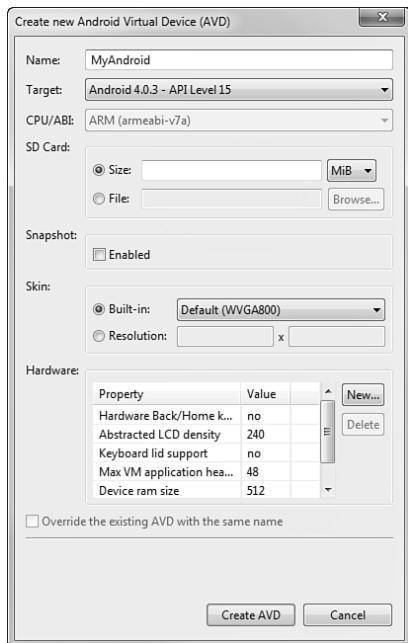
First, we'll create an emulator device. Click the New button on the right side of the AVD Manager. This brings up the dialog shown in Figure 3.2, Create New Android Virtual Device (AVD). If AVD Manager is not running, you can find it in Program Files under Android SDK Tools.

As you can see, a lot of options exist for the emulator! First, we'll focus on the Target field, which has a drop-down list of Android OS targets. This list will be quite small if you installed only 4.0 or 4.1 (using the Android SDK Manager in the previous hour). If multiple SDKs are installed, you will be able to choose the version you want to emulate.

Give your new emulator device a name, such as MyAndroid (or a descriptive name related to the settings chosen).

Choose the target for Android 4. It might say 4.0.3 or 4.1 or some other revision, depending on the specific version you installed on your dev PC.

The CPU/ABI field should be grayed out for Android 4 because devices use a standard CPU. If, for any reason, this field is not grayed out (for instance, if you are targeting API 14 or earlier), be sure to set it to ARM. Again, this shouldn't be necessary if you're using the latest version of the API.

**FIGURE 3.2**

Creating a new emulator—Android Virtual Device.

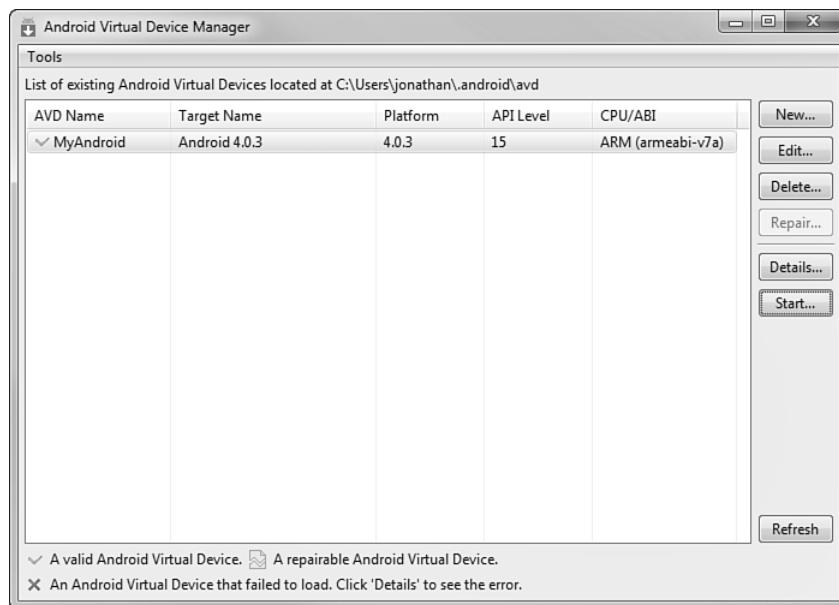
If you want to simulate an SD Card in the emulator, you can specify the size of the SD Card.

The display setting is a challenge because there are so many options. It's probably safe to go with WVGA800, although there are others. This will differ quite significantly depending on the hardware you want to emulate. For instance, if you want to emulate a specific smartphone model, you would look up the screen resolution for that phone. But if you want to emulate a tablet, it will likely have a different screen. This allows you to create more than one emulator device for these various possibilities in the hardware.

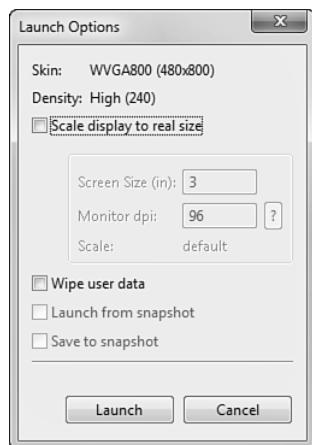
Figure 3.3 shows the AVD Manager with the new device added to the list. An emulator device called MyAndroid has been added. If you want to quickly peruse the settings for any device, double-click the device in the list to bring up a mini detail dialog.

## Running the Emulator

Choose your emulator device in the list and click the Start button on the right. This brings up the mini launch dialog shown in Figure 3.4. You can tweak a few options if desired and then click the Launch button.



**FIGURE 3.3**  
A new Android Virtual Device has been added.



**FIGURE 3.4**  
Preparing to launch the emulator.

The emulator device is shown in Figure 3.5, running Android OS 4.0. It may take a few minutes for the emulator to bring up the home screen shown here. The emulator must install the OS and

then run it. Because this is rather time consuming, you will want to keep the emulator open while writing Android code so it's available anytime you build and run your code.



**FIGURE 3.5**

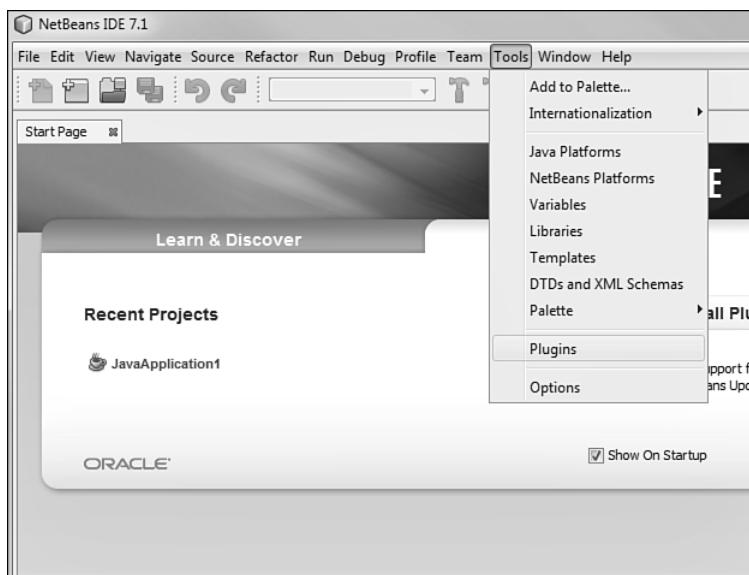
The Android OS 4.0 emulator is running.

## Plugging Android SDK into NetBeans

Although the Android SDK has been installed, NetBeans doesn't automatically know about it, so we have to configure NetBeans to recognize Android projects. This is done with a special plug-in. We'll go over the configuration step by step with plenty of screenshots so you can refer to this hour if needed.

The plug-in has to be downloaded from within NetBeans and is available from a file repository at [kenai.com](http://kenai.com). The plug-in is called NBAndroid, which is short for “NetBeans Android.”

First, open the Tools menu in NetBeans, as shown in Figure 3.6, and choose the Plug-ins menu option.



**FIGURE 3.6**

Invoking the Plug-ins dialog using the Tools menu.

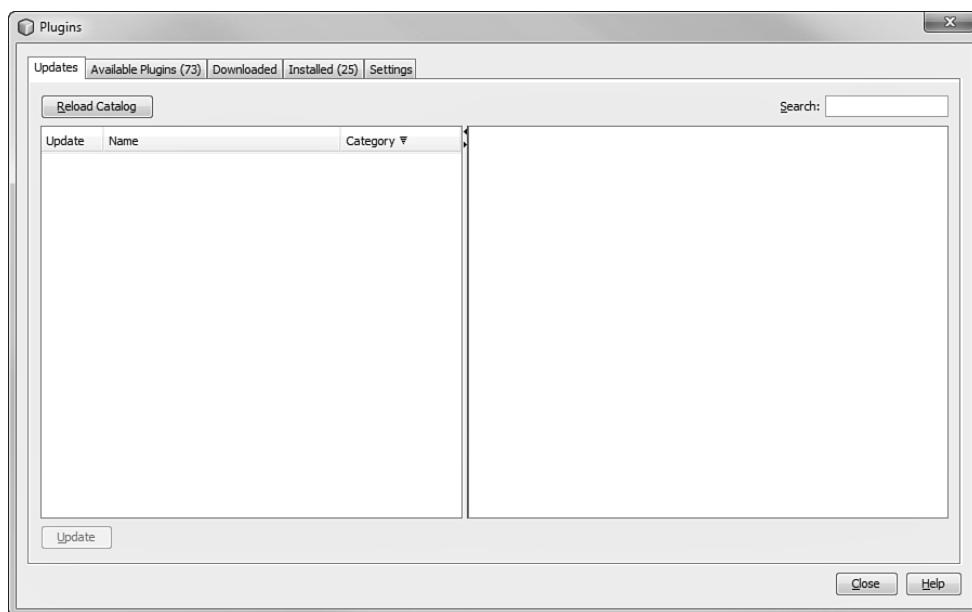
If this is a new install of NetBeans, you likely will not have any additional plug-ins installed yet (as expected). The Plug-ins dialog is shown in Figure 3.7. This first tab shows only updates and is normally empty.

Open the Settings tab, shown in Figure 3.8. Three update centers will be listed (or more, if you are using a more recent version than NetBeans 7.1). The options are not important, but just for reference: Certified Plug-ins, NetBeans Distribution, and Plug-in Portal. We will be adding our own new plug-in source.

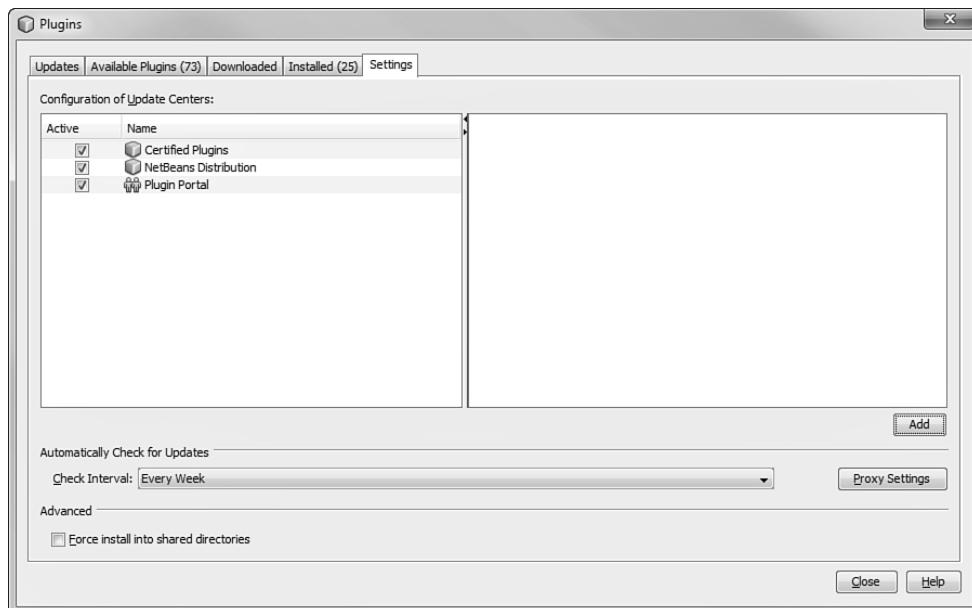
On the right side is a button labeled Add. Use this button to bring up the Update Center Customizer dialog (see Figure 3.9). This dialog has two fields where you can specify a new source for plug-ins.

In the Name field, enter **kenai.com**. In the URL field, enter this URL: <http://kenai.com/downloads/nbandroid/updatecenter/updates.xml>.

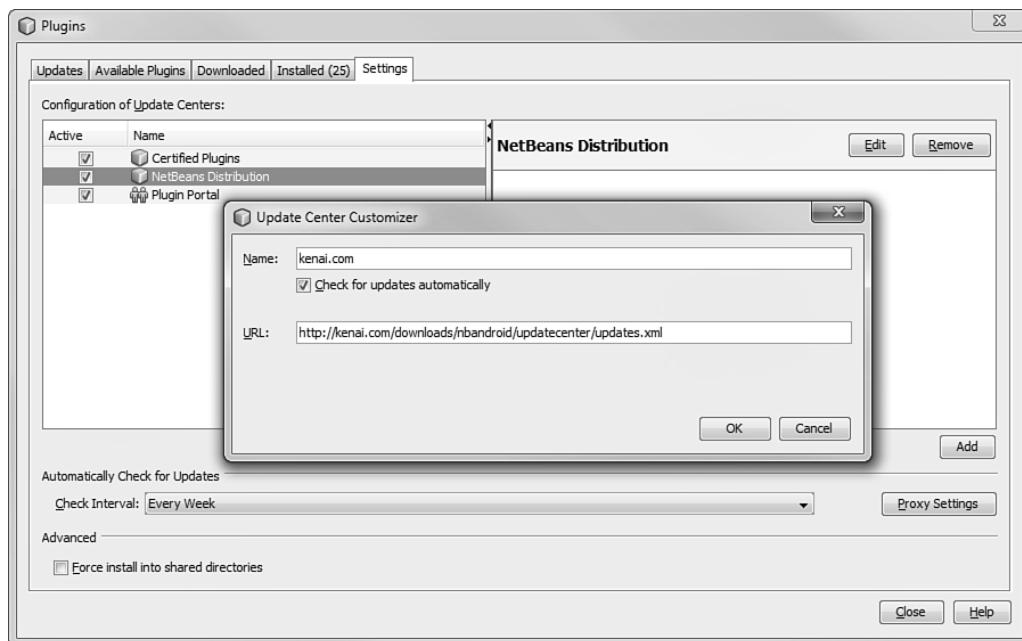
Click the OK button to proceed.

**FIGURE 3.7**

The Plug-ins dialog has several tabs.

**FIGURE 3.8**

Viewing the list of plug-in sources.



**FIGURE 3.9**  
Adding a new plug-in source (kenai.com).

#### BY THE WAY

---

Remember that URLs tend to change without notice! Your best friend is a search engine: Try searching Google for “netbeans android sdk” and you should find the latest tools and plug-ins.

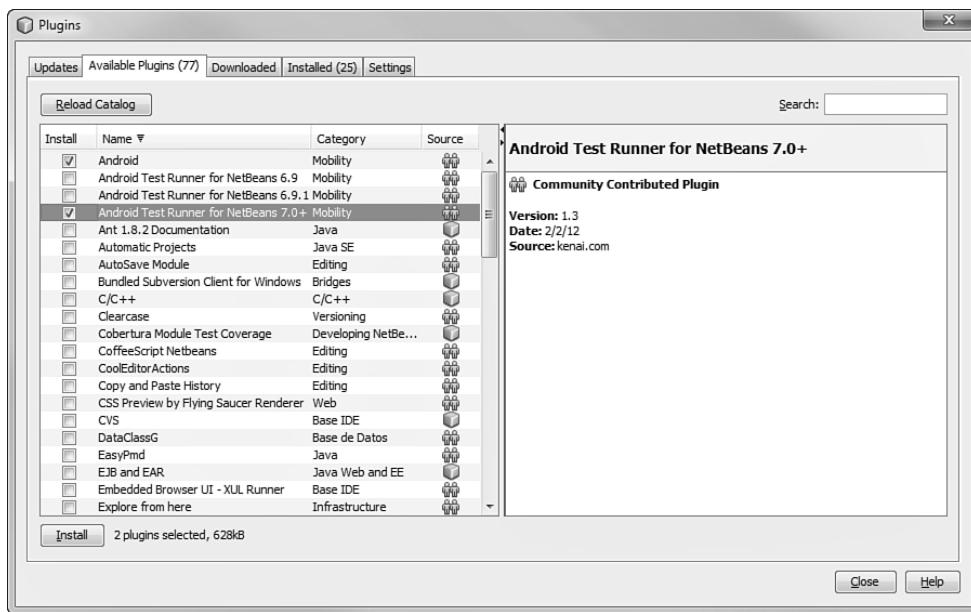
---

NetBeans then parses the URL specified for any available NetBeans plug-ins. Nothing more will come up—just switch over to the Available Plug-ins tab. The Android plug-ins appear at the top of the list (see Figure 3.10). If the list is not sorted alphabetically, click the Name field heading to sort by Name.

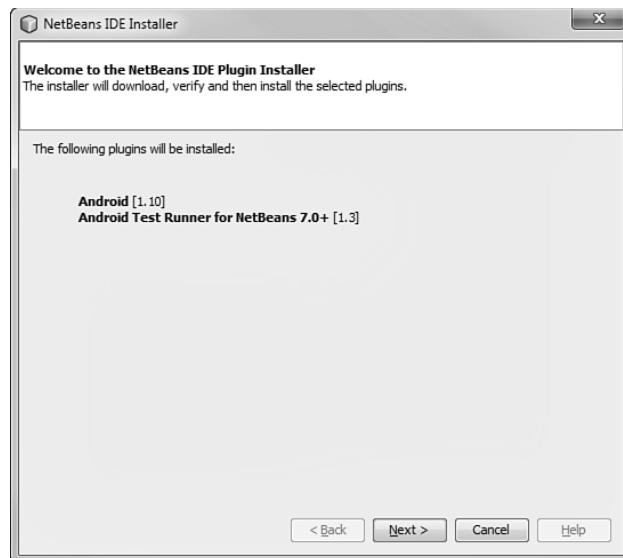
The only plug-in really needed is Android. Two have been selected in Figure 3.11, but the Android Test Runner plug-in is not essential—usually it’s for testing larger applications. You may skip it if you like.

Check the Android plug-in and then click the Install button at the bottom left.

A confirmation window will come up showing all the plug-ins you have selected to install. Click Next.

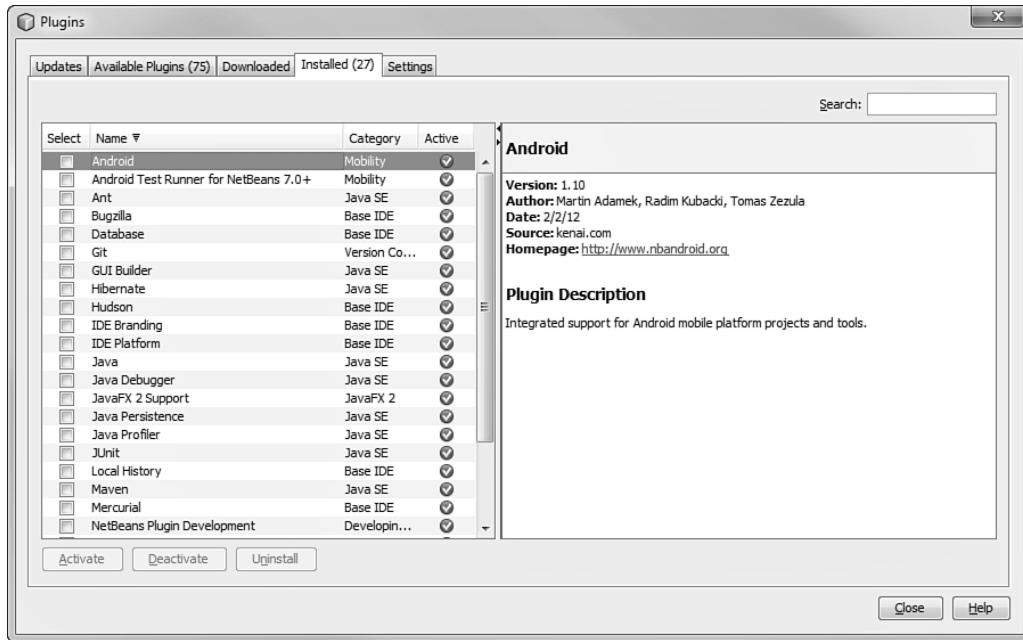
**FIGURE 3.10**

The list of Available Plug-ins (from all sources).

**FIGURE 3.11**

Preparing to install the Android plug-in for NetBeans.

The new NBAndroid plug-in will be installed. When complete, go to the Installed tab to verify the installation of the new plug-in. See Figure 3.12.



**FIGURE 3.12**

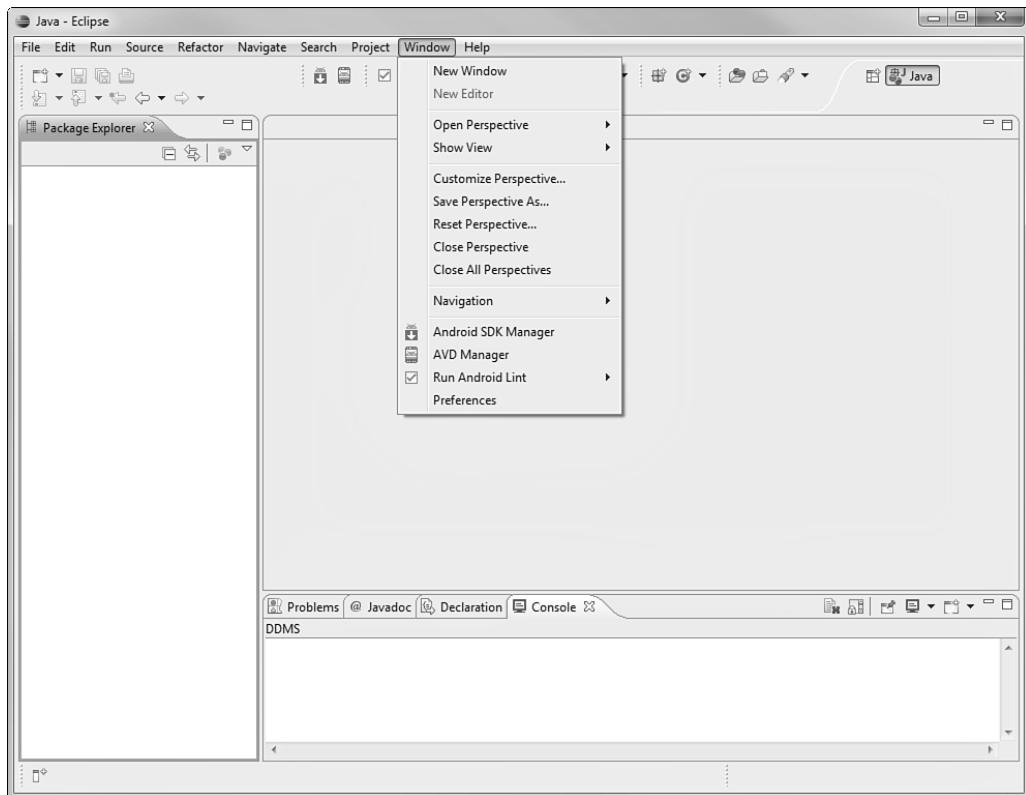
The Android plug-in now appears in the Installed list.

## Adding Android SDK Support to Eclipse

The Android SDK plugs into Eclipse a little easier than it does with NetBeans because only one install is required (and no separate plug-in like *NBAndroid* is needed). In the previous hour is a tutorial on installing the Android Development Kit and the Eclipse plug-in, so you may want to refer to Hour 2 if you haven't yet installed these packages. Assuming you have them installed, Eclipse is ready to go. In that case, the title of this section is a misnomer because the Android SDK does not need to be added—it's already good to go. Let's take a look.

## Creating a New Android Project in Eclipse

If you finished installing the files in the previous hour, verify the install in Eclipse by opening the Window menu, shown in Figure 3.13. You should see *Android SDK Manager* and *AVD Manager* to verify that Eclipse recognizes the new Android packages.

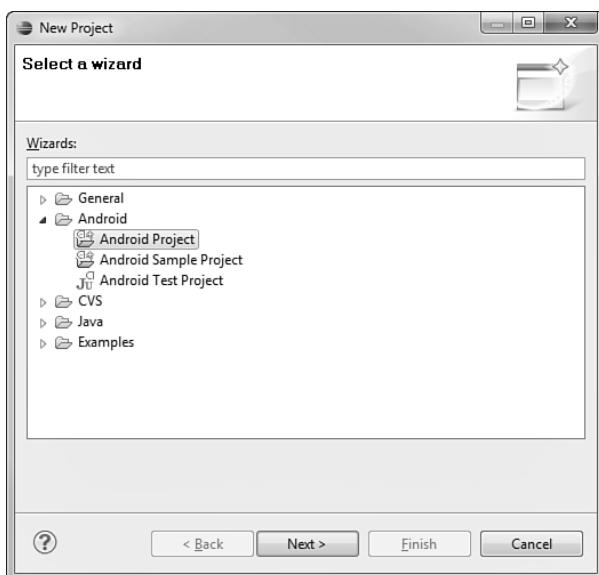
**FIGURE 3.13**

The Window menu in Eclipse shows the Android SDK tools.

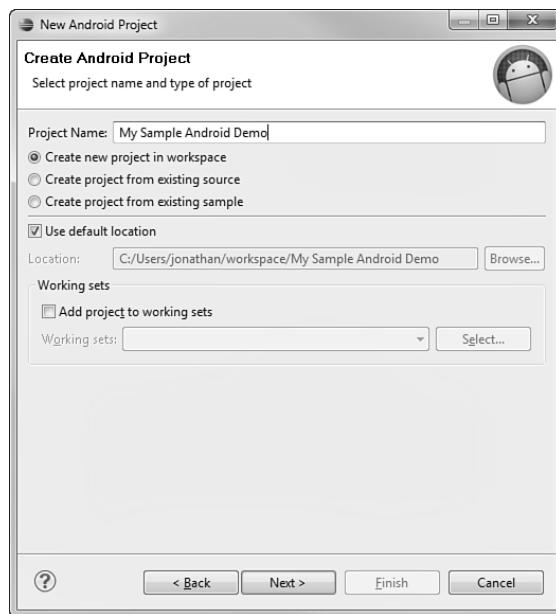
Now, open the File menu and choose New, Project. You should see a new Android group, as shown in Figure 3.14. Choose Android Project from the options shown and click Next.

The New Android Project dialog appears next, as shown in Figure 3.15. Enter a name for the project and choose either the default location or enter a new location for the project files.

The next dialog, shown in Figure 3.16, allows you to choose the Android SDK target (because multiple Android SDK versions may be installed to support various OS release levels). In the example shown, Android 4.0.3 was automatically checked. If you have more than one SDK installed, you may choose from among them.

**FIGURE 3.14**

Creating a new Android project in Eclipse using the New Project dialog.

**FIGURE 3.15**

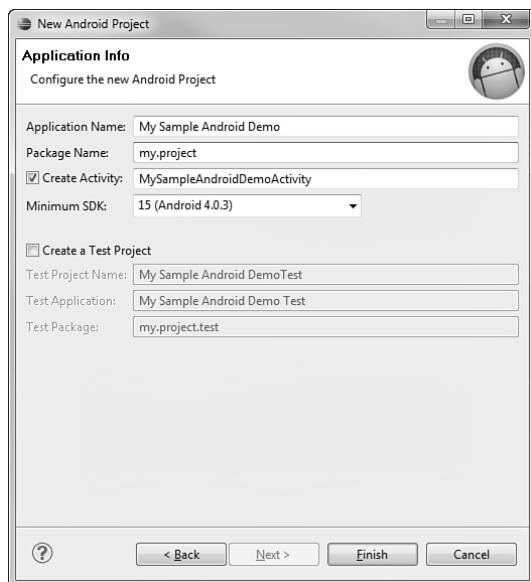
Entering the new project details.

**FIGURE 3.16**

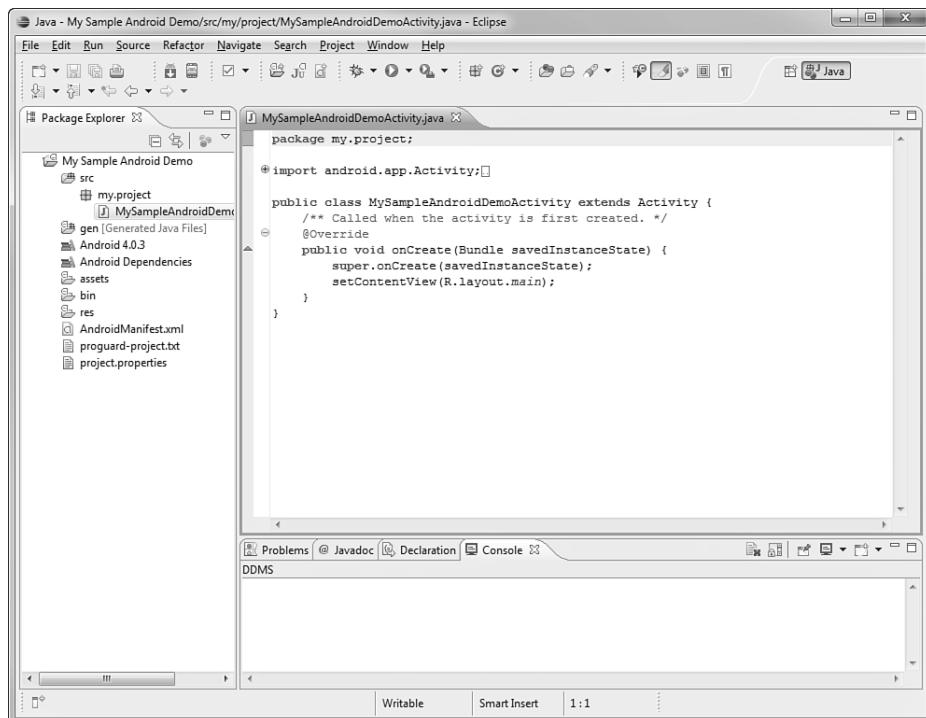
Verifying the Build Target for the new project.

The next dialog that comes up in the New Android Project Wizard, shown in Figure 3.17, will look familiar because you dealt with this information earlier in the NetBeans project: the Package Name and Activity. These will make a little more sense in the next hour when you see the names in the source code. For now, you may change the values as needed. Because this is only a configuration tutorial and you aren't writing any real Android code just yet, the values are not that important. But, as was the case with NetBeans, you must enter at least two words separated by a period into the Package Name field.

There are a *lot* of files created for a new project. Take a look at Figure 3.18, which shows the newly created project. In Package Explorer (on the left side of the IDE) you will see a folder called `src`, and then `my.project` (the package name), which contains the source code file called `MySampleAndroidDemoActivity.java`. This is similar to the files in the NetBeans project.



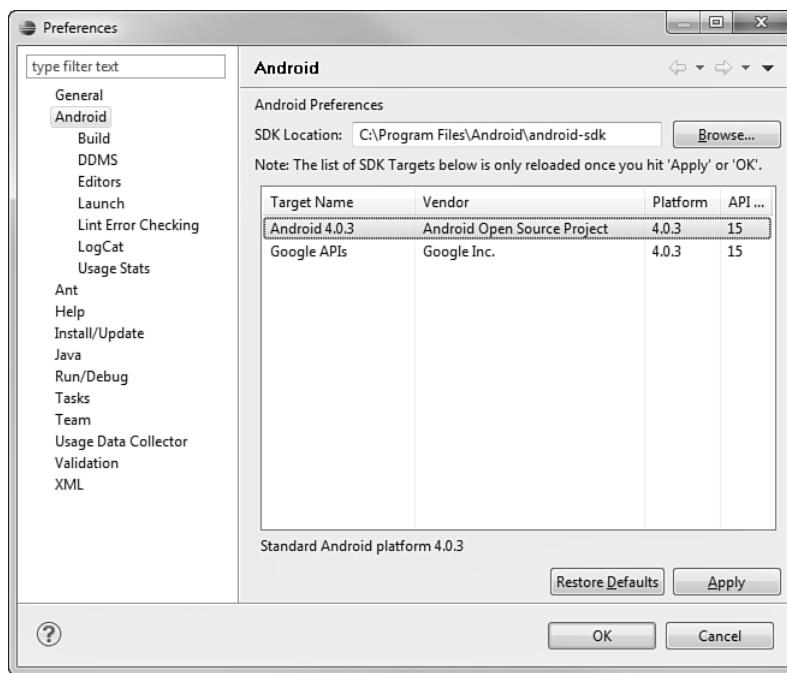
**FIGURE 3.17**  
Entering the Application Info fields.



**FIGURE 3.18**  
The new Android project has been created.

## Choosing an Android Build Target

To build and run an Android project in Eclipse, open up the Window menu and choose Preferences. This brings up a dialog called Preferences, shown in Figure 3.19. In the list of preference groups, choose Android to show the Android preferences. Use the Browse button to choose the Android SDK location. This may be in C:\Program Files\Android\android-sdk, or it may be in My Documents, or elsewhere—it depends on where you chose to install the SDK according to the steps. Next, choose the target from the list (Android 4.0.3 in this case).



**FIGURE 3.19**

Setting the Android SDK location and choosing the Android build target.

## Summary

This hour covered the additional steps needed to get started programming with the Android SDK using both NetBeans and Eclipse. By now you will have created an emulator device and installed the Android plug-ins for NetBeans and Eclipse and are ready to begin writing code! You write your first real Android project in the next hour.

## Q&A

- Q.** How do you think Java compares to other languages frequently used for game programming, such as C++ and C#?
- A.** Answers will vary.
- Q.** If the Android SDK is the library for making apps and games on the Android platform, how does it compare with the DirectX SDK for Windows? You may need to search online for information in order to discuss this topic.
- A.** Answers will vary.

## Workshop

### Quiz

- 1.** What is the technical name for the Android emulator?
- 2.** Which version of the Android OS does the emulator support?
- 3.** Which IDE uses the NANDROID plug-in?

### Answers

- 1.** Android Virtual Device (AVD)
- 2.** All versions (that have been installed).
- 3.** NetBeans

### Activities

- The Android SDK includes libraries written in Java that interface with a lower-level interface written in C++. It is possible to write C++ code and compile it to run on Android, with Java as a bridge. What is this C++ library called, and how does it work? You may need to do a cursory search online for “android C++ library.”

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