Class Diagram::-

What is a class diagram in UML?

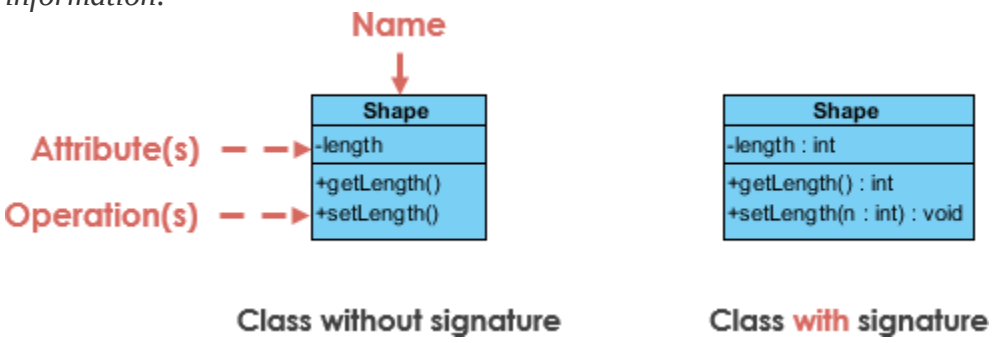
The Unified Modeling Language (UML) can help you model systems in various ways. One of the more popular types in UML is the class diagram. Popular among software engineers to document software architecture, class diagrams are a type of structure diagram because they describe what must be present in the system being modeled. No matter your level of familiarity with UML or class diagrams, our UML software is designed to be simple and easy to use.

UML was set up as a standardized model to describe an object-oriented programming approach. Since classes are the building block of objects, class diagrams are the building blocks of UML. The various components in a class diagram can represent the classes that will actually be programmed, the main objects, or the interactions between classes and objects.

The class shape itself consists of a rectangle with three rows. The top row contains the name of the class, the middle row contains the attributes of the class, and the bottom section expresses the methods or operations that the class may use. Classes and subclasses are grouped together to show the static relationship between each object.

UML Class Notation

A class represent a concept which encapsulates state (attributes) and behavior (operations). Each attribute has a type. Each operation has a signature. *The class name is the only mandatory information*.



Class Name:

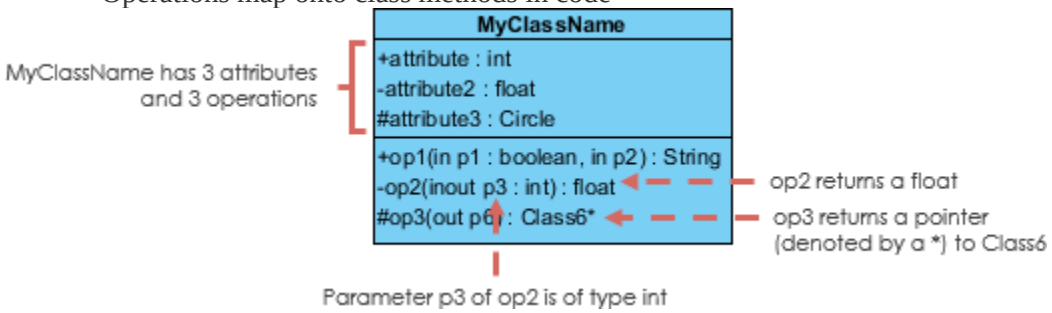
- The name of the class appears in the first partition.

Class Attributes:

- Attributes are shown in the second partition.
- The attribute type is shown after the colon.
- Attributes map onto member variables (data members) in code.

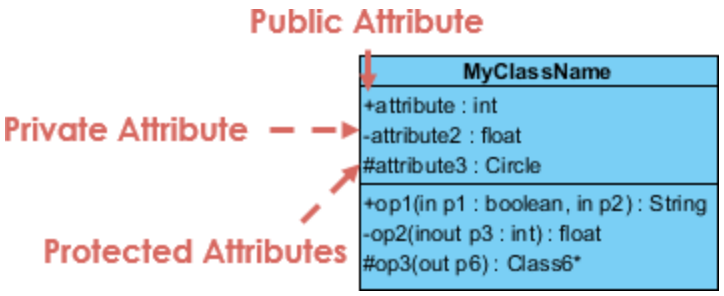
Class Operations (Methods):

- Operations are shown in the third partition. They are services the class provides.
- The return type of a method is shown after the colon at the end of the method signature.
- The return type of method parameters are shown after the colon following the parameter name. Operations map onto class methods in code



Class Visibility

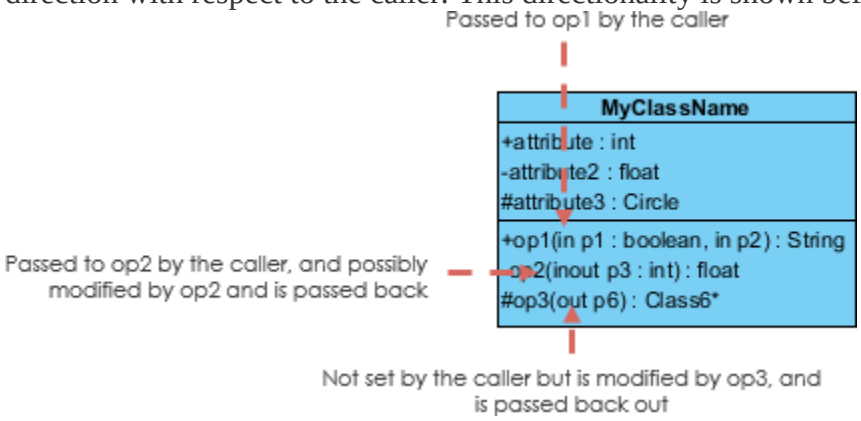
The +, - and # symbols before an attribute and operation name in a class denote the visibility of the attribute and operation.



- \+ denotes public attributes or operations
- \- denotes private attributes or operations
- # denotes protected attributes or operations

Parameter Directionality

Each parameter in an operation (method) may be denoted as in, out or inout which specifies its direction with respect to the caller. This directionality is shown before the parameter name.

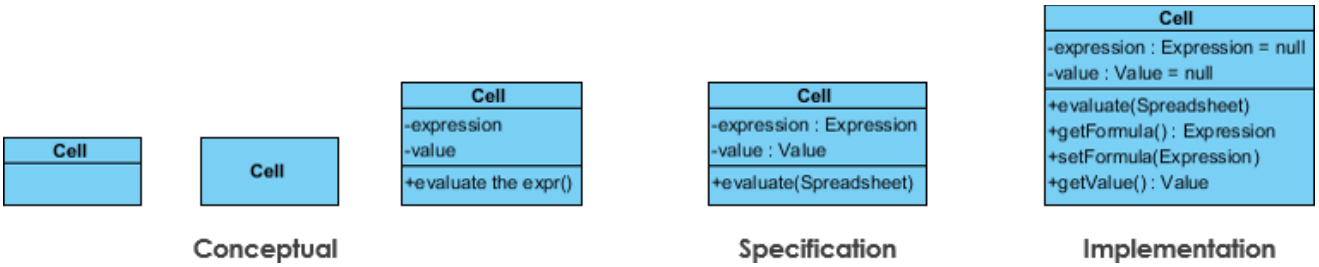


Perspectives of Class Diagram

The choice of perspective depends on how far along you are in the development process. During the formulation of a domain model, for example, you would seldom move past the conceptual perspective. Analysis models will typically feature a mix of conceptual and specification perspectives. Design model development will typically start with heavy emphasis on the specification perspective, and evolve into the implementation perspective.
A diagram can be interpreted from various perspectives:

- Conceptual: represents the concepts in the domain
- Specification: focus is on the interfaces of Abstract Data Type (ADTs) in the software
- Implementation: describes how classes will implement their interfaces

The perspective affects the amount of detail to be supplied and the kinds of relationships worth presenting. As we mentioned above, the class name is the only mandatory information.



Relationships between classes

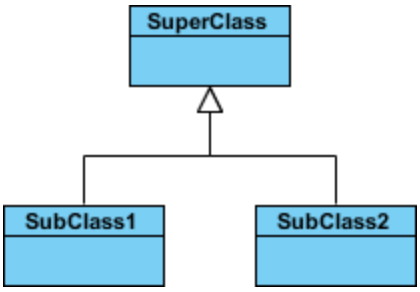
UML is not just about pretty pictures. If used correctly, UML precisely conveys how code should be implemented from diagrams. If precisely interpreted, the implemented code will correctly reflect the intent of the designer. Can you describe what each of the relationships mean relative to your target programming language shown in the Figure below?
If you can't yet recognize them, no problem this section is meant to help you to understand UML class relationships. A class may be involved in one or more relationships with other classes. A relationship can be one of the following types:

Inheritance (or Generalization):

A generalization is a taxonomic relationship between a more general classifier and a more specific classifier. Each instance of the specific classifier is also an indirect instance of the general classifier. Thus, the specific classifier inherits the features of the more general classifier.

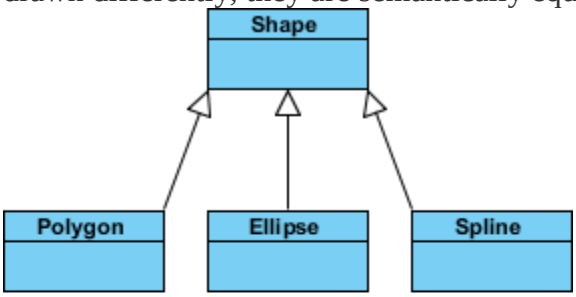
- Represents an "is-a" relationship.
- An abstract class name is shown in italics.
- SubClass1 and SubClass2 are specializations of SuperClass.

The figure below shows an example of inheritance hierarchy. SubClass1 and SubClass2 are derived from SuperClass. The relationship is displayed as a solid line with a hollow arrowhead that points from the child element to the parent element.

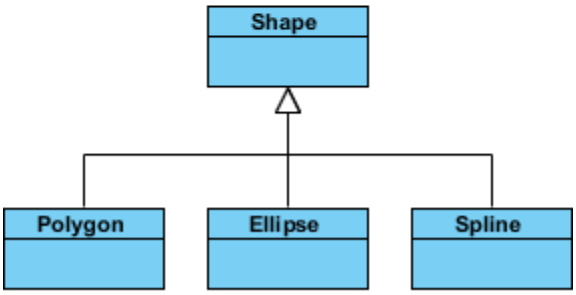


Inheritance Example - Shapes

The figure below shows an inheritance example with two styles. Although the connectors are drawn differently, they are semantically equivalent.



Style 1: Separate target



Style 2: Shared target

Class diagram examples

Creating a class diagram to map out process flows is easy. Consider the two examples below as you build your own class diagrams in UML.

Class diagram for a hotel management system

A class diagram can show the relationships between each object in a hotel management system, including guest information, staff responsibilities, and room occupancy. The example below provides a useful overview of the hotel management system.