Composite Design Pattern - Complete Guide

@ Pattern Overview

The Composite Pattern is a structural design pattern that allows you to compose objects into tree structures to represent part-whole hierarchies. It lets clients treat individual objects and compositions of objects uniformly.

In simple terms: Build tree structures where individual items and groups of items are treated the same way!

Some Components

1. Component (Abstract)

- Declares interface for objects in the composition
- Defines common operations for both simple and complex objects
- May implement default behavior common to all classes
- Declares interface for managing child components

2. Leaf

- Represents leaf objects in the composition (no children)
- Implements Component interface
- Defines behavior for primitive objects
- Cannot have children

3. Composite

- Defines behavior for components having children
- Stores child components
- Implements child-related operations in Component interface
- Usually delegates work to child components and combines results

4. Client

- Manipulates objects through Component interface
- Treats individual objects and compositions uniformly
- Doesn't need to know if working with leaf or composite





Both Files and Folders can be treated uniformly - you can get size, copy, move, or delete either one!

Working Flow

- 1. Client Request: Client calls operation on Component (could be Leaf or Composite)
- 2. **Leaf Processing**: If it's a Leaf, performs operation directly and returns result
- 3. **Composite Processing**: If it's a Composite, iterates through children
- 4. **Recursive Calls**: Each child processes the request (may be Leaf or Composite)
- 5. **Result Aggregation**: Composite combines results from all children
- 6. **Response**: Final result is returned to client

Advantages

1. Uniform Treatment

- Clients can treat individual objects and compositions identically
- Simplifies client code no need to differentiate between types
- Common interface for all objects in hierarchy

2. Hierarchical Structure

- Natural representation of tree-like structures
- Easy to add new kinds of components
- Flexible composition of objects

3. Open/Closed Principle

- Easy to add new component types without changing existing code
- Existing client code works with new components
- Follows Open/Closed Principle perfectly

4. Recursive Operations

- Operations can be applied to entire tree structures
- Automatic traversal through composition
- Clean and elegant recursive implementations

5. Dynamic Composition

- Can build complex structures at runtime
- Easy to add/remove components dynamically
- Flexible object composition

X Disadvantages

1. Overly General Design

- Component interface might become too general
- Hard to restrict components of composite
- May need runtime type checking

2. Type Safety Issues

- Difficult to enforce type constraints at compile time
- May need to rely on runtime checks
- Generic component interface loses some type safety

3. Complex Implementation

- Can be overkill for simple hierarchies
- Requires careful design of component interface
- May add unnecessary complexity

% Implementation Example

java			

```
import java.util.*;
// Component - Abstract base class
abstract class FileSystemComponent {
  protected String name;
  public FileSystemComponent(String name) {
    this.name = name;
  }
  // Common operations
  public String getName() {
    return name;
  }
  // Operations that should be implemented by both Leaf and Composite
  public abstract long getSize();
  public abstract void display(int depth);
  public abstract FileSystemComponent copy();
  // Operations for Composite only (default implementations)
  public void add(FileSystemComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException("Cannot add to a leaf component");
  }
  public void remove(FileSystemComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException("Cannot remove from a leaf component");
  }
  public List<FileSystemComponent> getChildren() {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException("Leaf components don't have children");
  }
  // Utility method for display indentation
  protected String getIndent(int depth) {
    return " ".repeat(depth);
  }
}
// Leaf - File
class File extends FileSystemComponent {
  private long size;
  private String extension;
  public File(String name, long size) {
     super(name);
```

```
this.size = size;
     this.extension = getFileExtension(name);
  }
  private String getFileExtension(String fileName) {
     int lastDot = fileName.lastIndexOf('.');
     return lastDot > 0 ? fileName.substring(lastDot + 1) : "";
  }
  @Override
  public long getSize() {
     return size;
  }
  @Override
  public void display(int depth) {
     System.out.println(getIndent(depth) + " | " + name + " (" + size + " bytes)");
  }
  @Override
  public FileSystemComponent copy() {
     return new File(name, size);
  }
  public String getExtension() {
     return extension;
  }
  // File-specific operations
  public void open() {
     System.out.println("Opening file: " + name);
  }
  public void edit(String content) {
     System.out.println("Editing file: " + name);
     // Simulate size change
     this.size = content.length();
  }
}
// Composite - Directory/Folder
class Directory extends FileSystemComponent {
  private List<FileSystemComponent> children;
  public Directory(String name) {
     super(name);
     this.children = new ArrayList<>();
```

```
}
@Override
public long getSize() {
  long totalSize = 0;
  for (FileSystemComponent child : children) {
    totalSize += child.getSize();
  }
  return totalSize;
}
@Override
public void display(int depth) {
  System.out.println(getIndent(depth) + " + name + "/ (" + getSize() + " bytes total)");
  for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
    child.display(depth + 1);
  }
}
@Override
public FileSystemComponent copy() {
  Directory copyDir = new Directory(name);
  for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
    copyDir.add(child.copy());
  }
  return copyDir;
}
@Override
public void add(FileSystemComponent component) {
  children.add(component);
  System.out.println("Added " + component.getName() + " to " + this.name);
}
@Override
public void remove(FileSystemComponent component) {
  children.remove(component);
  System.out.println("Removed " + component.getName() + " from " + this.name);
}
@Override
public List<FileSystemComponent> getChildren() {
  return new ArrayList <> (children);
}
// Directory-specific operations
public FileSystemComponent find(String fileName) {
```

```
for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
       if (child.getName().equals(fileName)) {
          return child:
       }
       if (child instanceof Directory) {
          FileSystemComponent found = ((Directory) child).find(fileName);
          if (found != null) {
            return found;
          }
       }
     return null;
  }
  public List<File> getAllFiles() {
     List<File> allFiles = new ArrayList<>();
     for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
       if (child instanceof File) {
          allFiles.add((File) child);
       } else if (child instanceof Directory) {
          allFiles.addAll(((Directory) child).getAllFiles());
       }
     return allFiles;
  }
  public int getFileCount() {
     int count = 0;
     for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
       if (child instanceof File) {
          count++;
       } else if (child instanceof Directory) {
          count += ((Directory) child).getFileCount();
       }
     }
     return count;
// Usage Example
public class CompositePatternDemo {
  public static void main(String[] args) {
     System.out.println("=== Composite Pattern Demo: File System ===\n");
     // Create files
     File resume = new File("resume.pdf", 1024);
     File project1 = new File("project1.txt", 2048);
```

```
File project2 = new File("project2.java", 4096);
File meetingNotes = new File("meeting.doc", 512);
File photo1 = new File("photo1.jpg", 8192);
File photo2 = new File("photo2.png", 6144);
File readme = new File("readme.txt", 256);
// Create directories
Directory root = new Directory("Root");
Directory documents = new Directory("Documents");
Directory projects = new Directory("Projects");
Directory notes = new Directory("Notes");
Directory pictures = new Directory("Pictures");
// Build the tree structure
root.add(documents);
root.add(pictures);
root.add(readme);
documents.add(resume);
documents.add(projects);
documents.add(notes);
projects.add(project1);
projects.add(project2);
notes.add(meetingNotes);
pictures.add(photo1);
pictures.add(photo2);
// Display the entire file system
System.out.println("File System Structure:");
root.display(0);
// Demonstrate uniform treatment
System.out.println("\n=== Uniform Operations ===");
demonstrateUniformOperations(root);
demonstrateUniformOperations(resume);
demonstrateUniformOperations(pictures);
// Directory-specific operations
System.out.println("\n=== Directory Operations ===");
System.out.println("Total files in root: " + root.getFileCount());
System.out.println("All files: ");
root.getAllFiles().forEach(file ->
  System.out.println(" - " + file.getName() + " (" + file.getSize() + " bytes)"));
```

```
// Search functionality
     System.out.println("\n=== Search Operations ===");
     FileSystemComponent found = root.find("project1.txt");
     if (found != null) {
       System.out.println("Found: " + found.getName());
     // Copy operation
     System.out.println("\n=== Copy Operations ===");
     FileSystemComponent rootCopy = root.copy();
     System.out.println("Copied file system:");
     rootCopy.display(0);
     // Dynamic modification
     System.out.println("\n=== Dynamic Modifications ===");
     File newFile = new File("temp.txt", 128);
     documents.add(newFile);
     System.out.println("After adding temp.txt:");
     root.display(0);
     documents.remove(newFile);
     System.out.println("After removing temp.txt:");
     root.display(0);
  }
  // This method treats all components uniformly
  private static void demonstrateUniformOperations(FileSystemComponent component) {
     System.out.println("Component: " + component.getName());
     System.out.println("Size: " + component.getSize() + " bytes");
     System.out.println("Type: " + (component instanceof File? "File": "Directory"));
     System.out.println("---");
  }
}
```

Advanced Features

1. Visitor Pattern Integration

```
// Visitor interface for different operations
interface FileSystemVisitor {
  void visitFile(File file);
  void visitDirectory(Directory directory);
}
// Add accept method to FileSystemComponent
abstract class FileSystemComponent {
  // ... existing code ...
  public abstract void accept(FileSystemVisitor visitor);
}
// Implementation in File
class File extends FileSystemComponent {
  // ... existing code ...
   @Override
  public void accept(FileSystemVisitor visitor) {
     visitor.visitFile(this);
  }
}
// Implementation in Directory
class Directory extends FileSystemComponent {
  // ... existing code ...
   @Override
  public void accept(FileSystemVisitor visitor) {
     visitor.visitDirectory(this);
     for (FileSystemComponent child: children) {
        child.accept(visitor);
     }
  }
}
// Concrete visitors
class SizeCalculatorVisitor implements FileSystemVisitor {
   private long totalSize = 0;
   @Override
   public void visitFile(File file) {
     totalSize += file.getSize();
  }
   @Override
```

```
public void visitDirectory(Directory directory) {
     // Directory size is calculated by visiting children
  }
  public long getTotalSize() {
     return totalSize;
  }
}
class BackupVisitor implements FileSystemVisitor {
  private List < String > backupPaths = new ArrayList < > ();
  @Override
  public void visitFile(File file) {
     backupPaths.add("Backing up file: " + file.getName());
  }
  @Override
  public void visitDirectory(Directory directory) {
     backupPaths.add("Creating backup directory: " + directory.getName());
  }
  public List<String> getBackupPaths() {
     return backupPaths;
  }
}
```

2. Iterator Pattern for Tree Traversal

```
class Treelterator implements Iterator < FileSystemComponent > {
  private Stack < File System Component > stack;
  public Treelterator(FileSystemComponent root) {
     stack = new Stack <> ();
     stack.push(root);
  }
  @Override
  public boolean hasNext() {
     return !stack.isEmpty();
  }
  @Override
  public FileSystemComponent next() {
     if (!hasNext()) {
       throw new NoSuchElementException();
     }
     FileSystemComponent current = stack.pop();
     if (current instanceof Directory) {
       Directory dir = (Directory) current;
       // Add children in reverse order for correct traversal
       List<FileSystemComponent> children = dir.getChildren();
       for (int i = \text{children.size}() - 1; i >= 0; i --) {
          stack.push(children.get(i));
     return current;
}
// Add to FileSystemComponent
public Iterator<FileSystemComponent> iterator() {
  return new Treelterator(this);
```

3. Caching and Performance Optimization

```
class CachedDirectory extends Directory {
  private Long cachedSize;
  private long lastModified;
  private boolean isDirty;
  public CachedDirectory(String name) {
     super(name);
     this.isDirty = true;
  }
  @Override
  public long getSize() {
     if (isDirty | cachedSize == null) {
       cachedSize = super.getSize();
       lastModified = System.currentTimeMillis();
       isDirty = false;
     return cachedSize;
  }
  @Override
  public void add(FileSystemComponent component) {
     super.add(component);
     invalidateCache();
  }
  @Override
  public void remove(FileSystemComponent component) {
     super.remove(component);
     invalidateCache();
  }
  private void invalidateCache() {
     this.isDirty = true;
     this.cachedSize = null;
  }
}
```

When to Use Composite Pattern

Use When:

- You want to represent part-whole hierarchies of objects
- You want clients to treat individual objects and compositions uniformly
- You have tree-like structures (file systems, organizational charts, UI components)

- You need to perform operations on entire object hierarchies
- Structure can be represented as a tree with uniform interface
- You want to simplify client code by eliminating type distinctions

X Avoid When:

- Your hierarchy is very simple and doesn't need uniform treatment
- Different components have vastly different interfaces
- Performance is critical and you can't afford the overhead
- Type safety is more important than uniform treatment
- You don't need recursive operations on the structure

****** Real-World Examples

1. UI Component Hierarchy					
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```
// UI Component system
abstract class UIComponent {
  protected String name;
  protected boolean visible = true;
  public abstract void render();
  public abstract void handleEvent(Event event);
  public void setVisible(boolean visible) {
     this.visible = visible;
  }
  // Composite operations
  public void add(UIComponent component) {
     throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
  }
  public void remove(UIComponent component) {
     throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
}
class Button extends UIComponent {
  private String text;
  public Button(String name, String text) {
     this.name = name;
     this.text = text;
  }
  @Override
  public void render() {
     if (visible) {
       System.out.println("Rendering button: " + text);
     }
  }
  @Override
  public void handleEvent(Event event) {
     if (event.getType() == EventType.CLICK) {
       System.out.println("Button " + name + " clicked!");
     }
  }
}
class Panel extends UIComponent {
```

```
private List<UIComponent> components = new ArrayList<>();
  public Panel(String name) {
    this.name = name;
  }
  @Override
  public void render() {
    if (visible) {
       System.out.println("Rendering panel: " + name);
       for (UIComponent component : components) {
         component.render();
  @Override
  public void handleEvent(Event event) {
    for (UIComponent component : components) {
       component.handleEvent(event);
    }
  }
  @Override
  public void add(UIComponent component) {
    components.add(component);
  }
  @Override
  public void remove(UIComponent component) {
    components.remove(component);
  }
}
```

2. Organization Structure

```
abstract class Employee {
  protected String name;
  protected String position;
  protected double salary;
  public Employee(String name, String position, double salary) {
    this.name = name:
    this.position = position;
    this.salary = salary;
  }
  public abstract void showDetails();
  public abstract double getTotalSalary();
  // Composite operations
  public void addSubordinate(Employee employee) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
  }
  public void removeSubordinate(Employee employee) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
  }
}
class Developer extends Employee {
  private String programmingLanguage;
  public Developer(String name, double salary, String language) {
     super(name, "Developer", salary);
    this.programmingLanguage = language;
  }
  @Override
  public void showDetails() {
    System.out.println("Developer: " + name + ", Language: " + programmingLanguage +
               ", Salary: $" + salary);
  }
  @Override
  public double getTotalSalary() {
    return salary;
  }
}
class Manager extends Employee {
  private List<Employee> subordinates = new ArrayList<>();
```

```
public Manager(String name, double salary) {
    super(name, "Manager", salary);
  }
  @Override
  public void showDetails() {
    System.out.println("Manager: " + name + ", Salary: $" + salary);
    System.out.println("Subordinates:");
    for (Employee subordinate : subordinates) {
       subordinate.showDetails();
    }
  }
  @Override
  public double getTotalSalary() {
    double total = salary;
    for (Employee subordinate : subordinates) {
       total += subordinate.getTotalSalary();
    return total;
  }
  @Override
  public void addSubordinate(Employee employee) {
    subordinates.add(employee);
  }
  @Override
  public void removeSubordinate(Employee employee) {
    subordinates.remove(employee);
  }
}
```

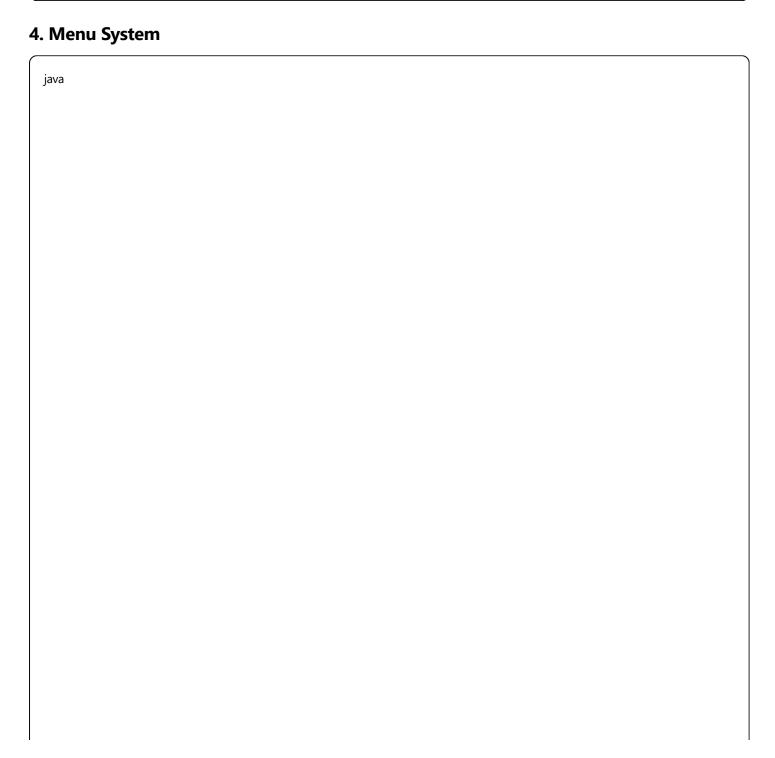
3. Mathematical Expressions

```
abstract class Expression {
  public abstract double evaluate();
  public abstract String toString();
}
class Number extends Expression {
  private double value;
  public Number(double value) {
     this.value = value;
  }
  @Override
  public double evaluate() {
     return value;
  }
  @Override
  public String toString() {
     return String.valueOf(value);
  }
}
class BinaryOperation extends Expression {
  private Expression left;
  private Expression right;
  private String operator;
  public BinaryOperation(Expression left, String operator, Expression right) {
     this.left = left;
     this.operator = operator;
     this.right = right;
  }
  @Override
  public double evaluate() {
     double leftValue = left.evaluate();
     double rightValue = right.evaluate();
     switch (operator) {
       case "+": return leftValue + rightValue;
       case "-": return leftValue - rightValue;
       case "*": return leftValue * rightValue;
       case "/": return leftValue / rightValue;
       default: throw new IllegalArgumentException("Unknown operator: " + operator);
     }
```

```
@Override
public String toString() {
    return "(" + left.toString() + " " + operator + " " + right.toString() + ")";
}

// Usage: (3 + 4) * (2 - 1)

Expression expr = new BinaryOperation(
    new BinaryOperation(new Number(3), "+", new Number(4)),
    "*",
    new BinaryOperation(new Number(2), "-", new Number(1))
);
```



```
abstract class MenuComponent {
  protected String name;
  public MenuComponent(String name) {
    this.name = name;
  }
  public abstract void display();
  public abstract void select();
  // Composite operations
  public void add(MenuComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
  }
  public void remove(MenuComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException();
  }
}
class MenuItem extends MenuComponent {
  private Runnable action;
  public MenuItem(String name, Runnable action) {
    super(name);
    this.action = action;
  }
  @Override
  public void display() {
    System.out.println(" " + name);
  }
  @Override
  public void select() {
    System.out.println("Executing: " + name);
    action.run();
  }
}
class Menu extends MenuComponent {
  private List<MenuComponent> menuComponents = new ArrayList<>();
  public Menu(String name) {
    super(name);
  }
```

```
@Override
  public void display() {
    System.out.println(name + ":");
    for (MenuComponent component : menuComponents) {
      component.display();
    }
  }
  @Override
  public void select() {
    display();
  }
  @Override
  public void add(MenuComponent component) {
    menuComponents.add(component);
  }
  @Override
  public void remove(MenuComponent component) {
    menuComponents.remove(component);
  }
  public MenuComponent getChild(int index) {
    return menuComponents.get(index);
  }
}
```

III Performance Considerations

1. Lazy Loading

```
class LazyDirectory extends Directory {
  private boolean loaded = false;
  private String path;
  public LazyDirectory(String name, String path) {
     super(name);
     this.path = path;
  private void loadIfNeeded() {
     if (!loaded) {
       loadChildrenFromFileSystem(path);
       loaded = true;
    }
  }
  @Override
  public long getSize() {
     loadIfNeeded();
     return super.getSize();
  }
  @Override
  public List<FileSystemComponent> getChildren() {
     loadIfNeeded();
     return super.getChildren();
  }
  private void loadChildrenFromFileSystem(String path) {
    // Load actual files and directories from filesystem
    // This is just a simulation
     System.out.println("Loading directory contents for: " + path);
  }
}
```

2. Memory Optimization with Flyweight

```
class FileType {
  private String extension;
  private String icon;
  private String description;
  public FileType(String extension, String icon, String description) {
     this.extension = extension;
     this.icon = icon;
     this.description = description;
  }
  // Getters...
}
class FileTypeFactory {
  private static Map < String, FileType> fileTypes = new HashMap <> ();
  public static FileType getFileType(String extension) {
     return fileTypes.computeIfAbsent(extension, ext -> {
       // Create file type based on extension
       return createFileType(ext);
     });
  }
  private static FileType createFileType(String extension) {
     switch (extension.toLowerCase()) {
       case "pdf": return new FileType("pdf", "]", "PDF Document");
       case "jpg": return new FileType("jpg", "
", "JPEG Image");
       case "txt": return new FileType("txt", " ", "Text File");
       default: return new FileType(extension, "]", "Unknown File");
     }
}
```

3. Concurrent Access Support

```
class ThreadSafeDirectory extends Directory {
  private final ReadWriteLock lock = new ReentrantReadWriteLock();
  public ThreadSafeDirectory(String name) {
     super(name);
  }
  @Override
  public long getSize() {
     lock.readLock().lock();
     try {
       return super.getSize();
     } finally {
       lock.readLock().unlock();
     }
  }
  @Override
  public void add(FileSystemComponent component) {
     lock.writeLock().lock();
     try {
       super.add(component);
     } finally {
       lock.writeLock().unlock();
     }
  }
  @Override
  public void remove(FileSystemComponent component) {
     lock.writeLock().lock();
     try {
       super.remove(component);
    } finally {
       lock.writeLock().unlock();
     }
  }
}
```

Best Practices

1. Design Component Interface Carefully

```
// Good: Focused interface with clear responsibilities
interface DrawableComponent {
  void draw(Graphics g);
  Rectangle getBounds();
  boolean contains(Point point);
  // Optional operations with default implementations
  default void add(DrawableComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException("Not a composite");
  }
  default void remove(DrawableComponent component) {
    throw new UnsupportedOperationException("Not a composite");
  }
  default List < Drawable Component > get Children() {
    return Collections.emptyList();
  }
}
```

2. Handle Invalid Operations Gracefully

```
java
abstract class Component {
  // Use enum for better type safety
  public enum ComponentType {
    LEAF, COMPOSITE
  }
  public abstract ComponentType getType();
  public void add(Component component) {
    if (getType() == ComponentType.LEAF) {
       throw new UnsupportedOperationException(
         "Cannot add children to leaf component: " + getClass().getSimpleName());
    doAdd(component);
  protected void doAdd(Component component) {
    // Override in composite classes
  }
}
```

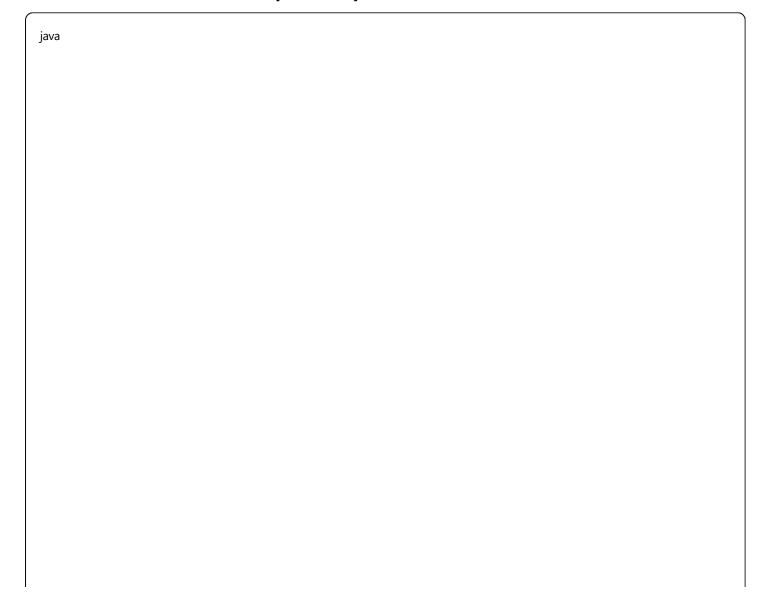
3. Implement Proper Equality and Hashing

```
class FileSystemComponent {
     @Override
     public boolean equals(Object obj) {
        if (this == obj) return true;
        if (obj == null || getClass() != obj.getClass()) return false;

        FileSystemComponent that = (FileSystemComponent) obj;
        return Objects.equals(name, that.name);
     }

     @Override
    public int hashCode() {
        return Objects.hash(name);
     }
}
```

4. Use Builder Pattern for Complex Composites



```
class DirectoryBuilder {
  private Directory directory;
  public DirectoryBuilder(String name) {
     this.directory = new Directory(name);
  }
  public DirectoryBuilder addFile(String name, long size) {
     directory.add(new File(name, size));
     return this;
  }
  public DirectoryBuilder addDirectory(String name, Consumer < DirectoryBuilder > builderConsumer) {
     DirectoryBuilder subBuilder = new DirectoryBuilder(name);
     builderConsumer.accept(subBuilder);
     directory.add(subBuilder.build());
     return this;
  }
  public Directory build() {
     return directory;
}
// Usage
Directory projectDir = new DirectoryBuilder("Project")
  .addFile("README.md", 1024)
  .addFile("pom.xml", 512)
  .addDirectory("src", src -> src
     .addDirectory("main", main -> main
       .addDirectory("java", java -> java
          .addFile("Main.java", 2048))))
  .build();
```

Related Patterns

1. Composite + Visitor

Already shown above - perfect for adding operations without modifying the composite structure.

2. Composite + Iterator

```
mum TraversalType {
    DEPTH_FIRST, BREADTH_FIRST, LEAVES_ONLY
}

class CompositeIteratorFactory {
    public static Iterator < FileSystemComponent > createIterator(
        FileSystemComponent root, TraversalType type) {
        switch (type) {
            case DEPTH_FIRST: return new DepthFirstIterator(root);
            case BREADTH_FIRST: return new BreadthFirstIterator(root);
            case LEAVES_ONLY: return new LeavesOnlyIterator(root);
            default: throw new IllegalArgumentException("Unknown traversal type");
        }
    }
}
```

3. Composite + Command

```
java
class CompositeCommand implements Command {
  private List<Command> commands = new ArrayList<>();
  public void add(Command command) {
    commands.add(command);
  }
  @Override
  public void execute() {
    for (Command command : commands) {
      command.execute();
    }
  }
  @Override
  public void undo() {
    // Undo in reverse order
    for (int i = commands.size() - 1; i >= 0; i--) {
      commands.get(i).undo();
  }
```