**How to Create immutable Class in java?**

# Why String Class is immutable in Java ?

The term **Mutable** means "can change" and Immutable means "cannot change". An **Immutable** Object means that the state of the Object cannot change after its creation. Here the String is **immutable** means that you cannot change the object itself, but you can change the reference to the object. Changing an object means to use its methods to change one of its fields or the fields are public (and not **final** ), so that you can be updated from outside without accessing them via methods. Once string object is created its data or state can't be changed but a new string object is created. An important point to note here is that, while the **String**object is immutable, its reference variable is not.

Here we see the difference between **mutating** an object, and changing a reference. str2 still points to the same object as we initially set str1 to point to. Setting str1 to "World!!" only changes the reference, while the String object it originally referred to remains unchanged.

Today we will learn how to create immutable class in java. **Immutable objects** are instances whose state doesn’t change after it has been initialized.

For example, String is an immutable class and once instantiated its value never changes.

**Read**: [Why String in immutable in Java](https://www.journaldev.com/802/string-immutable-final-java)

**Immutable Class in Java**

Immutable class is good for caching purpose because you don’t need to worry about the value changes.

Other benefit of immutable class is that it is inherently [**thread-safe**](https://www.journaldev.com/1061/thread-safety-in-java), so you don’t need to worry about thread safety in case of multi-threaded environment.

**Read**: [Java Thread Tutorial](https://www.journaldev.com/1079/multithreading-in-java) and [Java Multi-Threading Interview Questions](https://www.journaldev.com/1162/java-multithreading-concurrency-interview-questions-answers).

Here I am providing a way to create immutable class in java via an example for better understanding.

To create immutable class in java, you have to do following steps.

1. Declare the class as final so it can’t be extended.
2. Make all fields private so that direct access is not allowed.
3. Don’t provide setter methods for variables
4. Make all **mutable fields final** so that it’s value can be assigned only once.
5. Initialize all the fields via a constructor performing deep copy.
6. Perform cloning of objects in the getter methods to return a copy rather than returning the actual object reference.

To understand points 4 and 5, let’s run the sample Final class that works well and values doesn’t get altered after instantiation.

FinalClassExample.java

package com.journaldev.java;

import java.util.HashMap;

import java.util.Iterator;

public final class FinalClassExample {

private final int id;

private final String name;

private final HashMap<String,String> testMap;

public int getId() {

return id;

}

public String getName() {

return name;

}

/\*\*

\* Accessor function for mutable objects

\*/

public HashMap<String, String> getTestMap() {

//return testMap;

return (HashMap<String, String>) testMap.clone();

}

/\*\*

\* Constructor performing Deep Copy

\* @param i

\* @param n

\* @param hm

\*/

public FinalClassExample(int i, String n, HashMap<String,String> hm){

System.out.println("Performing Deep Copy for Object initialization");

this.id=i;

this.name=n;

HashMap<String,String> tempMap=new HashMap<String,String>();

String key;

Iterator<String> it = hm.keySet().iterator();

while(it.hasNext()){

key=it.next();

tempMap.put(key, hm.get(key));

}

this.testMap=tempMap;

}

/\*\*

\* Constructor performing Shallow Copy

\* @param i

\* @param n

\* @param hm

\*/

/\*\*

public FinalClassExample(int i, String n, HashMap<String,String> hm){

System.out.println("Performing Shallow Copy for Object initialization");

this.id=i;

this.name=n;

this.testMap=hm;

}

\*/

/\*\*

\* To test the consequences of Shallow Copy and how to avoid it with Deep Copy for creating immutable classes

\* @param args

\*/

public static void main(String[] args) {

HashMap<String, String> h1 = new HashMap<String,String>();

h1.put("1", "first");

h1.put("2", "second");

String s = "original";

int i=10;

FinalClassExample ce = new FinalClassExample(i,s,h1);

//Lets see whether its copy by field or reference

System.out.println(s==ce.getName());

System.out.println(h1 == ce.getTestMap());

//print the ce values

System.out.println("ce id:"+ce.getId());

System.out.println("ce name:"+ce.getName());

System.out.println("ce testMap:"+ce.getTestMap());

//change the local variable values

i=20;

s="modified";

h1.put("3", "third");

//print the values again

System.out.println("ce id after local variable change:"+ce.getId());

System.out.println("ce name after local variable change:"+ce.getName());

System.out.println("ce testMap after local variable change:"+ce.getTestMap());

HashMap<String, String> hmTest = ce.getTestMap();

hmTest.put("4", "new");

System.out.println("ce testMap after changing variable from accessor methods:"+ce.getTestMap());

}

}

Output of the above immutable class in java example program is:

Performing Deep Copy for Object initialization

true

false

ce id:10

ce name:original

ce testMap:{2=second, 1=first}

ce id after local variable change:10

ce name after local variable change:original

ce testMap after local variable change:{2=second, 1=first}

ce testMap after changing variable from accessor methods:{2=second, 1=first}

Now let’s comment the constructor providing deep copy and uncomment the constructor providing shallow copy. Also uncomment the return statement in getTestMap() method that returns the actual object reference and then execute the program once again.

Performing Shallow Copy for Object initialization

true

true

ce id:10

ce name:original

ce testMap:{2=second, 1=first}

ce id after local variable change:10

ce name after local variable change:original

ce testMap after local variable change:{3=third, 2=second, 1=first}

ce testMap after changing variable from accessor methods:{3=third, 2=second, 1=first, 4=new}

As you can see from the output, HashMap values got changed because of shallow copy in the constructor and providing direct reference to the original object in the getter function.

That’s all for how to create immutable class in java. If I have missed something here, feel free to comment.