Documentation

The Java™ Tutorials

Trail: Learning the Java Language
Lesson: Generics (Updated)

The Java Tutorials have been written for JDK 8. Examples and practices described in this page don't take advantage of improvements introduced in later releases and might use technology no longer available.
See Java Language Changes for a summary of updated language features in Java SE 9 and subsequent releases.
See JDK Release Notes for information about new features, enhancements, and removed or deprecated options for all JDK releases.

Generic Methods

Generic methods are methods that introduce their own type parameters. This is similar to declaring a generic type, but the type parameter's scope is limited to the method where it is declared. Static and non-static generic methods are allowed, as well as generic class constructors.

The syntax for a generic method includes a list of type parameters, inside angle brackets, which appears before the method's return type. For static generic methods, the type parameter section must appear before the method's return type.

The `Util` class includes a generic method, `compare`, which compares two `Pair` objects:

```
public class Util {
    public static <K, V> boolean compare(Pair<K, V> p1, Pair<K, V> p2) {
        return p1.getKey().equals(p2.getKey()) &&
                p1.getValue().equals(p2.getValue());
    }
}

public class Pair<K, V> {

    private K key;
    private V value;

    public Pair(K key, V value) {
        this.key = key;
        this.value = value;
    }

    public void setKey(K key) { this.key = key; }
    public void setValue(V value) { this.value = value; }
    public K getKey()   { return key; }
    public V getValue() { return value; }
}
```

The complete syntax for invoking this method would be:

```
Pair<Integer, String> p1 = new Pair<>(1, "apple");
Pair<Integer, String> p2 = new Pair<>(2, "pear");
boolean same = Util.<Integer, String>compare(p1, p2);
```

The type has been explicitly provided, as shown in bold. Generally, this can be left out and the compiler will infer the type that is needed:

```
Pair<Integer, String> p1 = new Pair<>(1, "apple");
Pair<Integer, String> p2 = new Pair<>(2, "pear");
boolean same = Util.compare(p1, p2);
```

This feature, known as *type inference*, allows you to invoke a generic method as an ordinary method, without specifying a type between angle brackets. This topic is further discussed in the following section, Type Inference.

Previous page: Raw Types
Next page: Bounded Type Parameters