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Introducing Classes

The class is at the core of Java. It is the logical construct upon which the entire Java language is built because it defines the shape and nature of an object. As such, the class forms the basis for object-oriented programming in Java. Any concept you wish to implement in a Java program must be encapsulated within a class.

Because the class is so fundamental to Java, this and the next few chapters will be devoted to it. Here, you will be introduced to the basic elements of a class and learn how a class can be used to create objects. You will also learn about methods, constructors, and the **this** keyword.

Class Fundamentals

Classes have been used since the beginning of this book. However, until now, only the most rudimentary form of a class has been used. The classes created in the preceding chapters primarily exist simply to encapsulate the **main()** method, which has been used to demonstrate the basics of the Java syntax. As you will see, classes are substantially more powerful than the limited ones presented so far.

Perhaps the most important thing to understand about a class is that it defines a new data type. Once defined, this new type can be used to create objects of that type. Thus, a class is a *template* for an object, and an object is an *instance* of a class. Because an object is an instance of a class, you will often see the two words *object* and *instance* used interchangeably.

The General Form of a Class

When you define a class, you declare its exact form and nature. You do this by specifying the data that it contains and the code that operates on that data. While very simple classes may contain only code or only data, most real-world classes contain both. As you will see, a class' code defines the interface to its data.

A class is declared by use of the **class** keyword. The classes that have been used up to this point are actually very limited examples of its complete form. Classes can (and usually do) get much more complex. A simplified general form of a **class** definition is shown here:

```
class classname {  
    type instance-variable1;  
    type instance-variable2;
```

```

// ...
type instance-variableN;

type methodname1(parameter-list) {
    // body of method
}
type methodname2(parameter-list) {
    // body of method
}
// ...
type methodnameN(parameter-list) {
    // body of method
}
}

```

The data, or variables, defined within a **class** are called *instance variables*. The code is contained within *methods*. Collectively, the methods and variables defined within a class are called *members* of the class. In most classes, the instance variables are acted upon and accessed by the methods defined for that class. Thus, as a general rule, it is the methods that determine how a class' data can be used.

Variables defined within a class are called instance variables because each instance of the class (that is, each object of the class) contains its own copy of these variables. Thus, the data for one object is separate and unique from the data for another. We will come back to this point shortly, but it is an important concept to learn early.

All methods have the same general form as **main()**, which we have been using thus far. However, most methods will not be specified as **static** or **public**. Notice that the general form of a class does not specify a **main()** method. Java classes do not need to have a **main()** method. You only specify one if that class is the starting point for your program. Further, applets don't require a **main()** method at all.

NOTE *C++ programmers will notice that the class declaration and the implementation of the methods are stored in the same place and not defined separately. This sometimes makes for very large **.java** files, since any class must be entirely defined in a single source file. This design feature was built into Java because it was felt that in the long run, having specification, declaration, and implementation all in one place makes for code that is easier to maintain.*

A Simple Class

Let's begin our study of the class with a simple example. Here is a class called **Box** that defines three instance variables: **width**, **height**, and **depth**. Currently, **Box** does not contain any methods (but some will be added soon).

```

class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;
}

```

As stated, a class defines a new type of data. In this case, the new data type is called **Box**. You will use this name to declare objects of type **Box**. It is important to remember that a **class** declaration only creates a template; it does not create an actual object. Thus, the preceding code does not cause any objects of type **Box** to come into existence.

To actually create a **Box** object, you will use a statement like the following:

```
Box mybox = new Box(); // create a Box object called mybox
```

After this statement executes, **mybox** will be an instance of **Box**. Thus, it will have “physical” reality. For the moment, don’t worry about the details of this statement.

As mentioned earlier, each time you create an instance of a class, you are creating an object that contains its own copy of each instance variable defined by the class. Thus, every **Box** object will contain its own copies of the instance variables **width**, **height**, and **depth**. To access these variables, you will use the *dot* (.) operator. The dot operator links the name of the object with the name of an instance variable. For example, to assign the **width** variable of **mybox** the value 100, you would use the following statement:

```
mybox.width = 100;
```

This statement tells the compiler to assign the copy of **width** that is contained within the **mybox** object the value of 100. In general, you use the dot operator to access both the instance variables and the methods within an object.

Here is a complete program that uses the **Box** class:

```
/* A program that uses the Box class.

   Call this file BoxDemo.java
*/
class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;
}

// This class declares an object of type Box.
class BoxDemo {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Box mybox = new Box();
        double vol;

        // assign values to mybox's instance variables
        mybox.width = 10;
        mybox.height = 20;
        mybox.depth = 15;

        // compute volume of box
        vol = mybox.width * mybox.height * mybox.depth;

        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}
```

You should call the file that contains this program **BoxDemo.java**, because the **main()** method is in the class called **BoxDemo**, not the class called **Box**. When you compile this program, you will find that two **.class** files have been created, one for **Box** and one for **BoxDemo**. The Java compiler automatically puts each class into its own **.class** file. It is not necessary for both the **Box** and the **BoxDemo** class to actually be in the same source file. You could put each class in its own file, called **Box.java** and **BoxDemo.java**, respectively.

To run this program, you must execute **BoxDemo.class**. When you do, you will see the following output:

```
Volume is 3000.0
```

As stated earlier, each object has its own copies of the instance variables. This means that if you have two **Box** objects, each has its own copy of **depth**, **width**, and **height**. It is important to understand that changes to the instance variables of one object have no effect on the instance variables of another. For example, the following program declares two **Box** objects:

```
// This program declares two Box objects.

class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;
}

class BoxDemo2 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Box mybox1 = new Box();
        Box mybox2 = new Box();
        double vol;

        // assign values to mybox1's instance variables
        mybox1.width = 10;
        mybox1.height = 20;
        mybox1.depth = 15;

        /* assign different values to mybox2's
           instance variables */
        mybox2.width = 3;
        mybox2.height = 6;
        mybox2.depth = 9;

        // compute volume of first box
        vol = mybox1.width * mybox1.height * mybox1.depth;
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);

        // compute volume of second box
        vol = mybox2.width * mybox2.height * mybox2.depth;
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}
```


The output produced by this program is shown here:

```
Volume is 3000.0
Volume is 162.0
```

As you can see, **mybox1**'s data is completely separate from the data contained in **mybox2**.

Declaring Objects

As just explained, when you create a class, you are creating a new data type. You can use this type to declare objects of that type. However, obtaining objects of a class is a two-step process. First, you must declare a variable of the class type. This variable does not define an object. Instead, it is simply a variable that can *refer* to an object. Second, you must acquire an actual, physical copy of the object and assign it to that variable. You can do this using the **new** operator. The **new** operator dynamically allocates (that is, allocates at run time) memory for an object and returns a reference to it. This reference is, more or less, the address in memory of the object allocated by **new**. This reference is then stored in the variable. Thus, in Java, all class objects must be dynamically allocated. Let's look at the details of this procedure.

In the preceding sample programs, a line similar to the following is used to declare an object of type **Box**:

```
Box mybox = new Box();
```

This statement combines the two steps just described. It can be rewritten like this to show each step more clearly:

```
Box mybox; // declare reference to object
mybox = new Box(); // allocate a Box object
```

The first line declares **mybox** as a reference to an object of type **Box**. After this line executes, **mybox** contains the value **null**, which indicates that it does not yet point to an actual object. Any attempt to use **mybox** at this point will result in a compile-time error. The next line allocates an actual object and assigns a reference to it to **mybox**. After the second line executes, you can use **mybox** as if it were a **Box** object. But in reality, **mybox** simply holds the memory address of the actual **Box** object. The effect of these two lines of code is depicted in Figure 6-1.

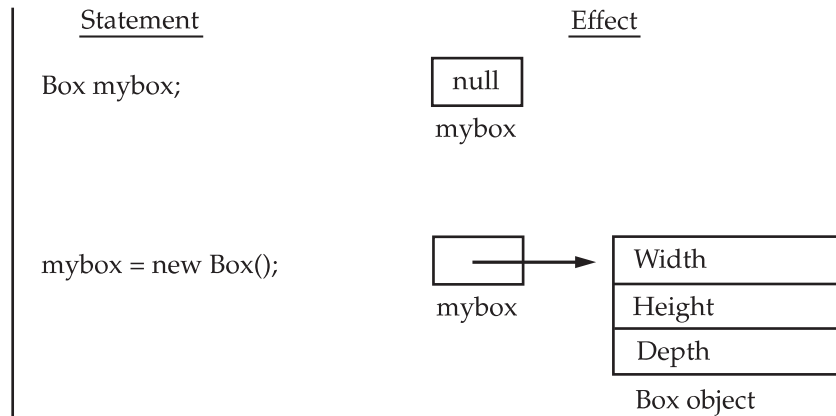
NOTE *Those readers familiar with C/C++ have probably noticed that object references appear to be similar to pointers. This suspicion is, essentially, correct. An object reference is similar to a memory pointer. The main difference—and the key to Java's safety—is that you cannot manipulate references as you can actual pointers. Thus, you cannot cause an object reference to point to an arbitrary memory location or manipulate it like an integer.*

A Closer Look at new

As just explained, the **new** operator dynamically allocates memory for an object. It has this general form:

```
class-var = new classname();
```

FIGURE 6-1
Declaring an object
of type **Box**



Here, *class-var* is a variable of the class type being created. The *classname* is the name of the class that is being instantiated. The class name followed by parentheses specifies the *constructor* for the class. A constructor defines what occurs when an object of a class is created. Constructors are an important part of all classes and have many significant attributes. Most real-world classes explicitly define their own constructors within their class definition. However, if no explicit constructor is specified, then Java will automatically supply a default constructor. This is the case with **Box**. For now, we will use the default constructor. Soon, you will see how to define your own constructors.

At this point, you might be wondering why you do not need to use **new** for such things as integers or characters. The answer is that Java's primitive types are not implemented as objects. Rather, they are implemented as "normal" variables. This is done in the interest of efficiency. As you will see, objects have many features and attributes that require Java to treat them differently than it treats the primitive types. By not applying the same overhead to the primitive types that applies to objects, Java can implement the primitive types more efficiently. Later, you will see object versions of the primitive types that are available for your use in those situations in which complete objects of these types are needed.

It is important to understand that **new** allocates memory for an object during run time. The advantage of this approach is that your program can create as many or as few objects as it needs during the execution of your program. However, since memory is finite, it is possible that **new** will not be able to allocate memory for an object because insufficient memory exists. If this happens, a run-time exception will occur. (You will learn how to handle this and other exceptions in Chapter 10.) For the sample programs in this book, you won't need to worry about running out of memory, but you will need to consider this possibility in real-world programs that you write.

Let's once again review the distinction between a class and an object. A class creates a new data type that can be used to create objects. That is, a class creates a logical framework that defines the relationship between its members. When you declare an object of a class, you are creating an instance of that class. Thus, a class is a logical construct. An object has physical reality. (That is, an object occupies space in memory.) It is important to keep this distinction clearly in mind.

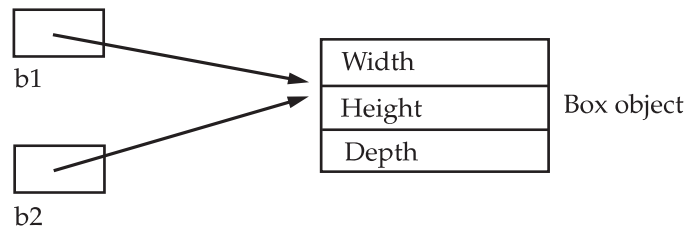
Assigning Object Reference Variables

Object reference variables act differently than you might expect when an assignment takes place. For example, what do you think the following fragment does?

```
Box b1 = new Box();
Box b2 = b1;
```

You might think that **b2** is being assigned a reference to a copy of the object referred to by **b1**. That is, you might think that **b1** and **b2** refer to separate and distinct objects. However, this would be wrong. Instead, after this fragment executes, **b1** and **b2** will both refer to the *same* object. The assignment of **b1** to **b2** did not allocate any memory or copy any part of the original object. It simply makes **b2** refer to the same object as does **b1**. Thus, any changes made to the object through **b2** will affect the object to which **b1** is referring, since they are the same object.

This situation is depicted here:



Although **b1** and **b2** both refer to the same object, they are not linked in any other way. For example, a subsequent assignment to **b1** will simply *unhook* **b1** from the original object without affecting the object or affecting **b2**. For example:

```
Box b1 = new Box();
Box b2 = b1;
// ...
b1 = null;
```

Here, **b1** has been set to **null**, but **b2** still points to the original object.

REMEMBER When you assign one object reference variable to another object reference variable, you are not creating a copy of the object, you are only making a copy of the reference.

Introducing Methods

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, classes usually consist of two things: instance variables and methods. The topic of methods is a large one because Java gives them so much power and flexibility. In fact, much of the next chapter is devoted to methods. However, there are some fundamentals that you need to learn now so that you can begin to add methods to your classes.

This is the general form of a method:

```
type name(parameter-list) {
    // body of method
}
```

Here, *type* specifies the type of data returned by the method. This can be any valid type, including class types that you create. If the method does not return a value, its return type must be **void**. The name of the method is specified by *name*. This can be any legal identifier other than those already used by other items within the current scope. The *parameter-list* is a sequence of type and identifier pairs separated by commas. Parameters are essentially variables that receive the value of the *arguments* passed to the method when it is called. If the method has no parameters, then the parameter list will be empty.

Methods that have a return type other than **void** return a value to the calling routine using the following form of the **return** statement:

```
return value;
```

Here, *value* is the value returned.

In the next few sections, you will see how to create various types of methods, including those that take parameters and those that return values.

Adding a Method to the Box Class

Although it is perfectly fine to create a class that contains only data, it rarely happens. Most of the time, you will use methods to access the instance variables defined by the class. In fact, methods define the interface to most classes. This allows the class implementor to hide the specific layout of internal data structures behind cleaner method abstractions. In addition to defining methods that provide access to data, you can also define methods that are used internally by the class itself.

Let's begin by adding a method to the **Box** class. It may have occurred to you while looking at the preceding programs that the computation of a box's volume was something that was best handled by the **Box** class rather than the **BoxDemo** class. After all, since the volume of a box is dependent upon the size of the box, it makes sense to have the **Box** class compute it. To do this, you must add a method to **Box**, as shown here:

```
// This program includes a method inside the box class.

class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // display volume of a box
    void volume() {
        System.out.print("Volume is ");
        System.out.println(width * height * depth);
    }
}
```

```
class BoxDemo3 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Box mybox1 = new Box();
        Box mybox2 = new Box();

        // assign values to mybox1's instance variables
        mybox1.width = 10;
        mybox1.height = 20;
        mybox1.depth = 15;

        /* assign different values to mybox2's
           instance variables */
        mybox2.width = 3;
        mybox2.height = 6;
        mybox2.depth = 9;

        // display volume of first box
        mybox1.volume();

        // display volume of second box
        mybox2.volume();
    }
}
```

This program generates the following output, which is the same as the previous version.

```
Volume is 3000.0
Volume is 162.0
```

Look closely at the following two lines of code:

```
mybox1.volume();
mybox2.volume();
```

The first line here invokes the `volume()` method on `mybox1`. That is, it calls `volume()` relative to the `mybox1` object, using the object's name followed by the dot operator. Thus, the call to `mybox1.volume()` displays the volume of the box defined by `mybox1`, and the call to `mybox2.volume()` displays the volume of the box defined by `mybox2`. Each time `volume()` is invoked, it displays the volume for the specified box.

If you are unfamiliar with the concept of calling a method, the following discussion will help clear things up. When `mybox1.volume()` is executed, the Java run-time system transfers control to the code defined inside `volume()`. After the statements inside `volume()` have executed, control is returned to the calling routine, and execution resumes with the line of code following the call. In the most general sense, a method is Java's way of implementing subroutines.

There is something very important to notice inside the `volume()` method: the instance variables `width`, `height`, and `depth` are referred to directly, without preceding them with an object name or the dot operator. When a method uses an instance variable that is defined by its class, it does so directly, without explicit reference to an object and without use of the dot operator. This is easy to understand if you think about it. A method is always invoked relative to some object of its class. Once this invocation has occurred, the object is known. Thus, within

a method, there is no need to specify the object a second time. This means that **width**, **height**, and **depth** inside `volume()` implicitly refer to the copies of those variables found in the object that invokes `volume()`.

Let's review: When an instance variable is accessed by code that is not part of the class in which that instance variable is defined, it must be done through an object, by use of the dot operator. However, when an instance variable is accessed by code that is part of the same class as the instance variable, that variable can be referred to directly. The same thing applies to methods.

Returning a Value

While the implementation of `volume()` does move the computation of a box's volume inside the `Box` class where it belongs, it is not the best way to do it. For example, what if another part of your program wanted to know the volume of a box, but not display its value? A better way to implement `volume()` is to have it compute the volume of the box and return the result to the caller. The following example, an improved version of the preceding program, does just that:

```
// Now, volume() returns the volume of a box.

class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }
}

class BoxDemo4 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Box mybox1 = new Box();
        Box mybox2 = new Box();
        double vol;

        // assign values to mybox1's instance variables
        mybox1.width = 10;
        mybox1.height = 20;
        mybox1.depth = 15;

        /* assign different values to mybox2's
           instance variables */
        mybox2.width = 3;
        mybox2.height = 6;
        mybox2.depth = 9;

        // get volume of first box
        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}
```

```
// get volume of second box
vol = mybox2.volume();
System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
}
}
```

As you can see, when `volume()` is called, it is put on the right side of an assignment statement. On the left is a variable, in this case `vol`, that will receive the value returned by `volume()`. Thus, after

```
vol = mybox1.volume();
```

executes, the value of `mybox1.volume()` is 3,000 and this value then is stored in `vol`.

There are two important things to understand about returning values:

- The type of data returned by a method must be compatible with the return type specified by the method. For example, if the return type of some method is `boolean`, you could not return an integer.
- The variable receiving the value returned by a method (such as `vol`, in this case) must also be compatible with the return type specified for the method.

One more point: The preceding program can be written a bit more efficiently because there is actually no need for the `vol` variable. The call to `volume()` could have been used in the `println()` statement directly, as shown here:

```
System.out.println("Volume is " + mybox1.volume());
```

In this case, when `println()` is executed, `mybox1.volume()` will be called automatically and its value will be passed to `println()`.

Adding a Method That Takes Parameters

While some methods don't need parameters, most do. Parameters allow a method to be generalized. That is, a parameterized method can operate on a variety of data and/or be used in a number of slightly different situations. To illustrate this point, let's use a very simple example. Here is a method that returns the square of the number 10:

```
int square()
{
    return 10 * 10;
}
```

While this method does, indeed, return the value of 10 squared, its use is very limited. However, if you modify the method so that it takes a parameter, as shown next, then you can make `square()` much more useful.

```
int square(int i)
{
    return i * i;
}
```

Now, `square()` will return the square of whatever value it is called with. That is, `square()` is now a general-purpose method that can compute the square of any integer value, rather than just 10.

Here is an example:

```
int x, y;
x = square(5); // x equals 25
x = square(9); // x equals 81
y = 2;
x = square(y); // x equals 4
```

In the first call to `square()`, the value 5 will be passed into parameter `i`. In the second call, `i` will receive the value 9. The third invocation passes the value of `y`, which is 2 in this example. As these examples show, `square()` is able to return the square of whatever data it is passed.

It is important to keep the two terms *parameter* and *argument* straight. A *parameter* is a variable defined by a method that receives a value when the method is called. For example, in `square()`, `i` is a parameter. An *argument* is a value that is passed to a method when it is invoked. For example, `square(100)` passes 100 as an argument. Inside `square()`, the parameter `i` receives that value.

You can use a parameterized method to improve the `Box` class. In the preceding examples, the dimensions of each box had to be set separately by use of a sequence of statements, such as:

```
mybox1.width = 10;
mybox1.height = 20;
mybox1.depth = 15;
```

While this code works, it is troubling for two reasons. First, it is clumsy and error prone. For example, it would be easy to forget to set a dimension. Second, in well-designed Java programs, instance variables should be accessed only through methods defined by their class. In the future, you can change the behavior of a method, but you can't change the behavior of an exposed instance variable.

Thus, a better approach to setting the dimensions of a box is to create a method that takes the dimensions of a box in its parameters and sets each instance variable appropriately. This concept is implemented by the following program:

```
// This program uses a parameterized method.

class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }

    // sets dimensions of box
    void setDim(double w, double h, double d) {
        width = w;
```



```
        height = h;
        depth = d;
    }
}

class BoxDemo5 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Box mybox1 = new Box();
        Box mybox2 = new Box();
        double vol;

        // initialize each box
        mybox1.setDim(10, 20, 15);
        mybox2.setDim(3, 6, 9);

        // get volume of first box
        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);

        // get volume of second box
        vol = mybox2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}
```

As you can see, the `setDim()` method is used to set the dimensions of each box. For example, when

```
mybox1.setDim(10, 20, 15);
```

is executed, 10 is copied into parameter **w**, 20 is copied into **h**, and 15 is copied into **d**. Inside `setDim()` the values of **w**, **h**, and **d** are then assigned to **width**, **height**, and **depth**, respectively.

For many readers, the concepts presented in the preceding sections will be familiar. However, if such things as method calls, arguments, and parameters are new to you, then you might want to take some time to experiment before moving on. The concepts of the method invocation, parameters, and return values are fundamental to Java programming.

Constructors

It can be tedious to initialize all of the variables in a class each time an instance is created. Even when you add convenience functions like `setDim()`, it would be simpler and more concise to have all of the setup done at the time the object is first created. Because the requirement for initialization is so common, Java allows objects to initialize themselves when they are created. This automatic initialization is performed through the use of a constructor.

A *constructor* initializes an object immediately upon creation. It has the same name as the class in which it resides and is syntactically similar to a method. Once defined, the constructor is automatically called immediately after the object is created, before the **new** operator completes. Constructors look a little strange because they have no return type, not even **void**. This is because the implicit return type of a class' constructor is the class type itself. It is the constructor's job to initialize the internal state of an object so that the code creating an instance will have a fully initialized, usable object immediately.

You can rework the **Box** example so that the dimensions of a box are automatically initialized when an object is constructed. To do so, replace **setDim()** with a constructor. Let's begin by defining a simple constructor that simply sets the dimensions of each box to the same values. This version is shown here:

```

/* Here, Box uses a constructor to initialize the
   dimensions of a box.
*/
class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // This is the constructor for Box.
    Box() {
        System.out.println("Constructing Box");
        width = 10;
        height = 10;
        depth = 10;
    }

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }
}

class BoxDemo6 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        // declare, allocate, and initialize Box objects
        Box mybox1 = new Box();
        Box mybox2 = new Box();

        double vol;

        // get volume of first box
        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);

        // get volume of second box
        vol = mybox2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}

```

When this program is run, it generates the following results:

```

Constructing Box
Constructing Box
Volume is 1000.0
Volume is 1000.0

```

As you can see, both `mybox1` and `mybox2` were initialized by the `Box()` constructor when they were created. Since the constructor gives all boxes the same dimensions, 10 by 10 by 10, both `mybox1` and `mybox2` will have the same volume. The `println()` statement inside `Box()` is for the sake of illustration only. Most constructors will not display anything. They will simply initialize an object.

Before moving on, let's reexamine the `new` operator. As you know, when you allocate an object, you use the following general form:

```
class-var = new classname();
```

Now you can understand why the parentheses are needed after the class name. What is actually happening is that the constructor for the class is being called. Thus, in the line

```
Box mybox1 = new Box();
```

`new Box()` is calling the `Box()` constructor. When you do not explicitly define a constructor for a class, then Java creates a default constructor for the class. This is why the preceding line of code worked in earlier versions of `Box` that did not define a constructor. The default constructor automatically initializes all instance variables to zero. The default constructor is often sufficient for simple classes, but it usually won't do for more sophisticated ones. Once you define your own constructor, the default constructor is no longer used.

Parameterized Constructors

While the `Box()` constructor in the preceding example does initialize a `Box` object, it is not very useful—all boxes have the same dimensions. What is needed is a way to construct `Box` objects of various dimensions. The easy solution is to add parameters to the constructor. As you can probably guess, this makes them much more useful. For example, the following version of `Box` defines a parameterized constructor that sets the dimensions of a box as specified by those parameters. Pay special attention to how `Box` objects are created.

```
/* Here, Box uses a parameterized constructor to
   initialize the dimensions of a box.
*/
class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // This is the constructor for Box.
    Box(double w, double h, double d) {
        width = w;
        height = h;
        depth = d;
    }

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }
}
```

```

class BoxDemo7 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        // declare, allocate, and initialize Box objects
        Box mybox1 = new Box(10, 20, 15);
        Box mybox2 = new Box(3, 6, 9);

        double vol;

        // get volume of first box
        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);

        // get volume of second box
        vol = mybox2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume is " + vol);
    }
}

```

The output from this program is shown here:

```

Volume is 3000.0
Volume is 162.0

```

As you can see, each object is initialized as specified in the parameters to its constructor. For example, in the following line,

```
Box mybox1 = new Box(10, 20, 15);
```

the values 10, 20, and 15 are passed to the **Box()** constructor when **new** creates the object. Thus, **mybox1**'s copy of **width**, **height**, and **depth** will contain the values 10, 20, and 15, respectively.

The **this** Keyword

Sometimes a method will need to refer to the object that invoked it. To allow this, Java defines the **this** keyword. **this** can be used inside any method to refer to the *current* object. That is, **this** is always a reference to the object on which the method was invoked. You can use **this** anywhere a reference to an object of the current class' type is permitted.

To better understand what **this** refers to, consider the following version of **Box()**:

```

// A redundant use of this.
Box(double w, double h, double d) {
    this.width = w;
    this.height = h;
    this.depth = d;
}

```

This version of **Box()** operates exactly like the earlier version. The use of **this** is redundant, but perfectly correct. Inside **Box()**, **this** will always refer to the invoking object. While it is redundant in this case, **this** is useful in other contexts, one of which is explained in the next section.

Instance Variable Hiding

As you know, it is illegal in Java to declare two local variables with the same name inside the same or enclosing scopes. Interestingly, you can have local variables, including formal parameters to methods, which overlap with the names of the class' instance variables. However, when a local variable has the same name as an instance variable, the local variable *hides* the instance variable. This is why **width**, **height**, and **depth** were not used as the names of the parameters to the **Box()** constructor inside the **Box** class. If they had been, then **width** would have referred to the formal parameter, hiding the instance variable **width**. While it is usually easier to simply use different names, there is another way around this situation. Because **this** lets you refer directly to the object, you can use it to resolve any name space collisions that might occur between instance variables and local variables. For example, here is another version of **Box()**, which uses **width**, **height**, and **depth** for parameter names and then uses **this** to access the instance variables by the same name:

```
// Use this to resolve name-space collisions.
Box(double width, double height, double depth) {
    this.width = width;
    this.height = height;
    this.depth = depth;
}
```

A word of caution: The use of **this** in such a context can sometimes be confusing, and some programmers are careful not to use local variables and formal parameter names that hide instance variables. Of course, other programmers believe the contrary—that it is a good convention to use the same names for clarity, and use **this** to overcome the instance variable hiding. It is a matter of taste which approach you adopt.

Garbage Collection

Since objects are dynamically allocated by using the **new** operator, you might be wondering how such objects are destroyed and their memory released for later reallocation. In some languages, such as C++, dynamically allocated objects must be manually released by use of a **delete** operator. Java takes a different approach; it handles deallocation for you automatically. The technique that accomplishes this is called *garbage collection*. It works like this: when no references to an object exist, that object is assumed to be no longer needed, and the memory occupied by the object can be reclaimed. There is no explicit need to destroy objects as in C++. Garbage collection only occurs sporadically (if at all) during the execution of your program. It will not occur simply because one or more objects exist that are no longer used. Furthermore, different Java run-time implementations will take varying approaches to garbage collection, but for the most part, you should not have to think about it while writing your programs.

The **finalize()** Method

Sometimes an object will need to perform some action when it is destroyed. For example, if an object is holding some non-Java resource such as a file handle or character font, then you might want to make sure these resources are freed before an object is destroyed. To handle

such situations, Java provides a mechanism called *finalization*. By using finalization, you can define specific actions that will occur when an object is just about to be reclaimed by the garbage collector.

To add a finalizer to a class, you simply define the **finalize()** method. The Java run time calls that method whenever it is about to recycle an object of that class. Inside the **finalize()** method, you will specify those actions that must be performed before an object is destroyed. The garbage collector runs periodically, checking for objects that are no longer referenced by any running state or indirectly through other referenced objects. Right before an asset is freed, the Java run time calls the **finalize()** method on the object.

The **finalize()** method has this general form:

```
protected void finalize()
{
    // finalization code here
}
```

Here, the keyword **protected** is a specifier that prevents access to **finalize()** by code defined outside its class. This and the other access specifiers are explained in Chapter 7.

It is important to understand that **finalize()** is only called just prior to garbage collection. It is not called when an object goes out-of-scope, for example. This means that you cannot know when—or even if—**finalize()** will be executed. Therefore, your program should provide other means of releasing system resources, etc., used by the object. It must not rely on **finalize()** for normal program operation.

NOTE *If you are familiar with C++, then you know that C++ allows you to define a destructor for a class, which is called when an object goes out-of-scope. Java does not support this idea or provide for destructors. The **finalize()** method only approximates the function of a destructor. As you get more experienced with Java, you will see that the need for destructor functions is minimal because of Java's garbage collection subsystem.*

A Stack Class

While the **Box** class is useful to illustrate the essential elements of a class, it is of little practical value. To show the real power of classes, this chapter will conclude with a more sophisticated example. As you recall from the discussion of object-oriented programming (OOP) presented in Chapter 2, one of OOP's most important benefits is the encapsulation of data and the code that manipulates that data. As you have seen, the class is the mechanism by which encapsulation is achieved in Java. By creating a class, you are creating a new data type that defines both the nature of the data being manipulated and the routines used to manipulate it. Further, the methods define a consistent and controlled interface to the class' data. Thus, you can use the class through its methods without having to worry about the details of its implementation or how the data is actually managed within the class. In a sense, a class is like a "data engine." No knowledge of what goes on inside the engine is required to use the engine through its controls. In fact, since the details are hidden, its inner workings can be changed as needed. As long as your code uses the class through its methods, internal details can change without causing side effects outside the class.

To see a practical application of the preceding discussion, let's develop one of the archetypal examples of encapsulation: the stack. A *stack* stores data using first-in, last-out ordering. That is, a stack is like a stack of plates on a table—the first plate put down on the table is the last plate to be used. Stacks are controlled through two operations traditionally called *push* and *pop*. To put an item on top of the stack, you will use *push*. To take an item off the stack, you will use *pop*. As you will see, it is easy to encapsulate the entire stack mechanism.

Here is a class called **Stack** that implements a stack for integers:

```
// This class defines an integer stack that can hold 10 values.
class Stack {
    int stck[] = new int[10];
    int tos;

    // Initialize top-of-stack
    Stack() {
        tos = -1;
    }

    // Push an item onto the stack
    void push(int item) {
        if(tos==9)
            System.out.println("Stack is full.");
        else
            stck[++tos] = item;
    }

    // Pop an item from the stack
    int pop() {
        if(tos < 0) {
            System.out.println("Stack underflow.");
            return 0;
        }
        else
            return stck[tos--];
    }
}
```

As you can see, the **Stack** class defines two data items and three methods. The stack of integers is held by the array **stck**. This array is indexed by the variable **tos**, which always contains the index of the top of the stack. The **Stack()** constructor initializes **tos** to **-1**, which indicates an empty stack. The method **push()** puts an item on the stack. To retrieve an item, call **pop()**. Since access to the stack is through **push()** and **pop()**, the fact that the stack is held in an array is actually not relevant to using the stack. For example, the stack could be held in a more complicated data structure, such as a linked list, yet the interface defined by **push()** and **pop()** would remain the same.

The class **TestStack**, shown here, demonstrates the **Stack** class. It creates two integer stacks, pushes some values onto each, and then pops them off.

```
class TestStack {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Stack mystack1 = new Stack();
        Stack mystack2 = new Stack();
    }
}
```

```

// push some numbers onto the stack
for(int i=0; i<10; i++) mystack1.push(i);
for(int i=10; i<20; i++) mystack2.push(i);

// pop those numbers off the stack
System.out.println("Stack in mystack1:");
for(int i=0; i<10; i++)
    System.out.println(mystack1.pop());

System.out.println("Stack in mystack2:");
for(int i=0; i<10; i++)
    System.out.println(mystack2.pop());
}
}

```

This program generates the following output:

```

Stack in mystack1:
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
Stack in mystack2:
19
18
17
16
15
14
13
12
11
10

```

As you can see, the contents of each stack are separate.

One last point about the **Stack** class. As it is currently implemented, it is possible for the array that holds the stack, **stck**, to be altered by code outside of the **Stack** class. This leaves **Stack** open to misuse or mischief. In the next chapter, you will see how to remedy this situation.

Inheritance

Inheritance is one of the cornerstones of object-oriented programming because it allows the creation of hierarchical classifications. Using inheritance, you can create a general class that defines traits common to a set of related items. This class can then be inherited by other, more specific classes, each adding those things that are unique to it. In the terminology of Java, a class that is inherited is called a *superclass*. The class that does the inheriting is called a *subclass*. Therefore, a subclass is a specialized version of a superclass. It inherits all of the instance variables and methods defined by the superclass and adds its own, unique elements.

Inheritance Basics

To inherit a class, you simply incorporate the definition of one class into another by using the **extends** keyword. To see how, let's begin with a short example. The following program creates a superclass called **A** and a subclass called **B**. Notice how the keyword **extends** is used to create a subclass of **A**.

```
// A simple example of inheritance.

// Create a superclass.
class A {
    int i, j;

    void showij() {
        System.out.println("i and j: " + i + " " + j);
    }
}

// Create a subclass by extending class A.
class B extends A {
    int k;

    void showk() {
        System.out.println("k: " + k);
    }
    void sum() {
        System.out.println("i+j+k: " + (i+j+k));
    }
}
```

```

class SimpleInheritance {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        A superOb = new A();
        B subOb = new B();

        // The superclass may be used by itself.
        superOb.i = 10;
        superOb.j = 20;
        System.out.println("Contents of superOb: ");
        superOb.showij();
        System.out.println();

        /* The subclass has access to all public members of
           its superclass. */
        subOb.i = 7;
        subOb.j = 8;
        subOb.k = 9;
        System.out.println("Contents of subOb: ");
        subOb.showij();
        subOb.showk();
        System.out.println();

        System.out.println("Sum of i, j and k in subOb:");
        subOb.sum();
    }
}

```

The output from this program is shown here:

```

Contents of superOb:
i and j: 10 20

```

```

Contents of subOb:
i and j: 7 8
k: 9

```

```

Sum of i, j and k in subOb:
i+j+k: 24

```

As you can see, the subclass **B** includes all of the members of its superclass, **A**. This is why **subOb** can access **i** and **j** and call **showij()**. Also, inside **sum()**, **i** and **j** can be referred to directly, as if they were part of **B**.

Even though **A** is a superclass for **B**, it is also a completely independent, stand-alone class. Being a superclass for a subclass does not mean that the superclass cannot be used by itself. Further, a subclass can be a superclass for another subclass.

The general form of a **class** declaration that inherits a superclass is shown here:

```

class subclass-name extends superclass-name {
    // body of class
}

```

You can only specify one superclass for any subclass that you create. Java does not support the inheritance of multiple superclasses into a single subclass. You can, as stated, create a hierarchy of inheritance in which a subclass becomes a superclass of another subclass. However, no class can be a superclass of itself.

Member Access and Inheritance

Although a subclass includes all of the members of its superclass, it cannot access those members of the superclass that have been declared as **private**. For example, consider the following simple class hierarchy:

```

/* In a class hierarchy, private members remain
   private to their class.

   This program contains an error and will not
   compile.
*/

// Create a superclass.
class A {
    int i; // public by default
    private int j; // private to A

    void setij(int x, int y) {
        i = x;
        j = y;
    }
}

// A's j is not accessible here.
class B extends A {
    int total;
    void sum() {
        total = i + j; // ERROR, j is not accessible here
    }
}

class Access {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B subOb = new B();

        subOb.setij(10, 12);

        subOb.sum();
        System.out.println("Total is " + subOb.total);
    }
}

```

This program will not compile because the reference to **j** inside the **sum()** method of **B** causes an access violation. Since **j** is declared as **private**, it is only accessible by other members of its own class. Subclasses have no access to it.

REMEMBER *A class member that has been declared as private will remain private to its class. It is not accessible by any code outside its class, including subclasses.*

A More Practical Example

Let's look at a more practical example that will help illustrate the power of inheritance. Here, the final version of the **Box** class developed in the preceding chapter will be extended to include a fourth component called **weight**. Thus, the new class will contain a box's width, height, depth, and weight.

```
// This program uses inheritance to extend Box.
class Box {
    double width;
    double height;
    double depth;

    // construct clone of an object
    Box(Box ob) { // pass object to constructor
        width = ob.width;
        height = ob.height;
        depth = ob.depth;
    }

    // constructor used when all dimensions specified
    Box(double w, double h, double d) {
        width = w;
        height = h;
        depth = d;
    }

    // constructor used when no dimensions specified
    Box() {
        width = -1; // use -1 to indicate
        height = -1; // an uninitialized
        depth = -1; // box
    }

    // constructor used when cube is created
    Box(double len) {
        width = height = depth = len;
    }

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }
}

// Here, Box is extended to include weight.
class BoxWeight extends Box {
    double weight; // weight of box
```

```

// constructor for BoxWeight
BoxWeight(double w, double h, double d, double m) {
    width = w;
    height = h;
    depth = d;
    weight = m;
}
}

class DemoBoxWeight {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        BoxWeight mybox1 = new BoxWeight(10, 20, 15, 34.3);
        BoxWeight mybox2 = new BoxWeight(2, 3, 4, 0.076);
        double vol;

        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mybox1 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mybox1 is " + mybox1.weight);
        System.out.println();

        vol = mybox2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mybox2 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mybox2 is " + mybox2.weight);
    }
}

```

The output from this program is shown here:

```

Volume of mybox1 is 3000.0
Weight of mybox1 is 34.3

Volume of mybox2 is 24.0
Weight of mybox2 is 0.076

```

BoxWeight inherits all of the characteristics of **Box** and adds to them the **weight** component. It is not necessary for **BoxWeight** to re-create all of the features found in **Box**. It can simply extend **Box** to meet its own purposes.

A major advantage of inheritance is that once you have created a superclass that defines the attributes common to a set of objects, it can be used to create any number of more specific subclasses. Each subclass can precisely tailor its own classification. For example, the following class inherits **Box** and adds a color attribute:

```

// Here, Box is extended to include color.
class ColorBox extends Box {
    int color; // color of box

    ColorBox(double w, double h, double d, int c) {
        width = w;
        height = h;
        depth = d;
        color = c;
    }
}

```

Remember, once you have created a superclass that defines the general aspects of an object, that superclass can be inherited to form specialized classes. Each subclass simply adds its own unique attributes. This is the essence of inheritance.

A Superclass Variable Can Reference a Subclass Object

A reference variable of a superclass can be assigned a reference to any subclass derived from that superclass. You will find this aspect of inheritance quite useful in a variety of situations. For example, consider the following:

```
class RefDemo {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        BoxWeight weightbox = new BoxWeight(3, 5, 7, 8.37);
        Box plainbox = new Box();
        double vol;

        vol = weightbox.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of weightbox is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of weightbox is " +
            weightbox.weight);
        System.out.println();

        // assign BoxWeight reference to Box reference
        plainbox = weightbox;

        vol = plainbox.volume(); // OK, volume() defined in Box
        System.out.println("Volume of plainbox is " + vol);

        /* The following statement is invalid because plainbox
           does not define a weight member. */
        // System.out.println("Weight of plainbox is " + plainbox.weight);
    }
}
```

Here, **weightbox** is a reference to **BoxWeight** objects, and **plainbox** is a reference to **Box** objects. Since **BoxWeight** is a subclass of **Box**, it is permissible to assign **plainbox** a reference to the **weightbox** object.

It is important to understand that it is the type of the reference variable—not the type of the object that it refers to—that determines what members can be accessed. That is, when a reference to a subclass object is assigned to a superclass reference variable, you will have access only to those parts of the object defined by the superclass. This is why **plainbox** can't access **weight** even when it refers to a **BoxWeight** object. If you think about it, this makes sense, because the superclass has no knowledge of what a subclass adds to it. This is why the last line of code in the preceding fragment is commented out. It is not possible for a **Box** reference to access the **weight** field, because **Box** does not define one.

Although the preceding may seem a bit esoteric, it has some important practical applications—two of which are discussed later in this chapter.

Using super

In the preceding examples, classes derived from **Box** were not implemented as efficiently or as robustly as they could have been. For example, the constructor for **BoxWeight** explicitly initializes the **width**, **height**, and **depth** fields of **Box()**. Not only does this duplicate code found in its superclass, which is inefficient, but it implies that a subclass must be granted access to these members. However, there will be times when you will want to create a superclass that keeps the details of its implementation to itself (that is, that keeps its data members private). In this case, there would be no way for a subclass to directly access or initialize these variables on its own. Since encapsulation is a primary attribute of OOP, it is not surprising that Java provides a solution to this problem. Whenever a subclass needs to refer to its immediate superclass, it can do so by use of the keyword **super**.

super has two general forms. The first calls the superclass' constructor. The second is used to access a member of the superclass that has been hidden by a member of a subclass. Each use is examined here.

Using super to Call Superclass Constructors

A subclass can call a constructor defined by its superclass by use of the following form of **super**:

```
super(arg-list);
```

Here, *arg-list* specifies any arguments needed by the constructor in the superclass. **super()** must always be the first statement executed inside a subclass' constructor.

To see how **super()** is used, consider this improved version of the **BoxWeight()** class:

```
// BoxWeight now uses super to initialize its Box attributes.
class BoxWeight extends Box {
    double weight; // weight of box

    // initialize width, height, and depth using super()
    BoxWeight(double w, double h, double d, double m) {
        super(w, h, d); // call superclass constructor
        weight = m;
    }
}
```

Here, **BoxWeight()** calls **super()** with the arguments **w**, **h**, and **d**. This causes the **Box()** constructor to be called, which initializes **width**, **height**, and **depth** using these values. **BoxWeight** no longer initializes these values itself. It only needs to initialize the value unique to it: **weight**. This leaves **Box** free to make these values **private** if desired.

In the preceding example, **super()** was called with three arguments. Since constructors can be overloaded, **super()** can be called using any form defined by the superclass. The constructor executed will be the one that matches the arguments. For example, here is a complete implementation of **BoxWeight** that provides constructors for the various ways

that a box can be constructed. In each case, `super()` is called using the appropriate arguments. Notice that **width**, **height**, and **depth** have been made private within **Box**.

```
// A complete implementation of BoxWeight.
class Box {
    private double width;
    private double height;
    private double depth;

    // construct clone of an object
    Box(Box ob) { // pass object to constructor
        width = ob.width;
        height = ob.height;
        depth = ob.depth;
    }

    // constructor used when all dimensions specified
    Box(double w, double h, double d) {
        width = w;
        height = h;
        depth = d;
    }

    // constructor used when no dimensions specified
    Box() {
        width = -1; // use -1 to indicate
        height = -1; // an uninitialized
        depth = -1; // box
    }

    // constructor used when cube is created
    Box(double len) {
        width = height = depth = len;
    }

    // compute and return volume
    double volume() {
        return width * height * depth;
    }
}

// BoxWeight now fully implements all constructors.
class BoxWeight extends Box {
    double weight; // weight of box

    // construct clone of an object
    BoxWeight(BoxWeight ob) { // pass object to constructor
        super(ob);
        weight = ob.weight;
    }

    // constructor when all parameters are specified
    BoxWeight(double w, double h, double d, double m) {
```



```

        super(w, h, d); // call superclass constructor
        weight = m;
    }

    // default constructor
    BoxWeight() {
        super();
        weight = -1;
    }

    // constructor used when cube is created
    BoxWeight(double len, double m) {
        super(len);
        weight = m;
    }
}

class DemoSuper {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        BoxWeight mybox1 = new BoxWeight(10, 20, 15, 34.3);
        BoxWeight mybox2 = new BoxWeight(2, 3, 4, 0.076);
        BoxWeight mybox3 = new BoxWeight(); // default
        BoxWeight mycube = new BoxWeight(3, 2);
        BoxWeight myclone = new BoxWeight(mybox1);
        double vol;

        vol = mybox1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mybox1 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mybox1 is " + mybox1.weight);
        System.out.println();

        vol = mybox2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mybox2 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mybox2 is " + mybox2.weight);
        System.out.println();

        vol = mybox3.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mybox3 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mybox3 is " + mybox3.weight);
        System.out.println();

        vol = myclone.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of myclone is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of myclone is " + myclone.weight);
        System.out.println();

        vol = mycube.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of mycube is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of mycube is " + mycube.weight);
        System.out.println();
    }
}

```

This program generates the following output:

```
Volume of mybox1 is 3000.0
Weight of mybox1 is 34.3

Volume of mybox2 is 24.0
Weight of mybox2 is 0.076

Volume of mybox3 is -1.0
Weight of mybox3 is -1.0

Volume of myclone is 3000.0
Weight of myclone is 34.3

Volume of mycube is 27.0
Weight of mycube is 2.0
```

Pay special attention to this constructor in **BoxWeight()**:

```
// construct clone of an object
BoxWeight(BoxWeight ob) { // pass object to constructor
    super(ob);
    weight = ob.weight;
}
```

Notice that **super()** is passed an object of type **BoxWeight**—not of type **Box**. This still invokes the constructor **Box(Box ob)**. As mentioned earlier, a superclass variable can be used to reference any object derived from that class. Thus, we are able to pass a **BoxWeight** object to the **Box** constructor. Of course, **Box** only has knowledge of its own members.

Let's review the key concepts behind **super()**. When a subclass calls **super()**, it is calling the constructor of its immediate superclass. Thus, **super()** always refers to the superclass immediately above the calling class. This is true even in a multileveled hierarchy. Also, **super()** must always be the first statement executed inside a subclass constructor.

A Second Use for super

The second form of **super** acts somewhat like **this**, except that it always refers to the superclass of the subclass in which it is used. This usage has the following general form:

```
super.member
```

Here, *member* can be either a method or an instance variable.

This second form of **super** is most applicable to situations in which member names of a subclass hide members by the same name in the superclass. Consider this simple class hierarchy:

```
// Using super to overcome name hiding.
class A {
    int i;
}
```

```
// Create a subclass by extending class A.
class B extends A {
    int i; // this i hides the i in A

    B(int a, int b) {
        super.i = a; // i in A
        i = b; // i in B
    }

    void show() {
        System.out.println("i in superclass: " + super.i);
        System.out.println("i in subclass: " + i);
    }
}

class UseSuper {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B subOb = new B(1, 2);

        subOb.show();
    }
}
```

This program displays the following:

```
i in superclass: 1
i in subclass: 2
```

Although the instance variable **i** in **B** hides the **i** in **A**, **super** allows access to the **i** defined in the superclass. As you will see, **super** can also be used to call methods that are hidden by a subclass.

Creating a Multilevel Hierarchy

Up to this point, we have been using simple class hierarchies that consist of only a superclass and a subclass. However, you can build hierarchies that contain as many layers of inheritance as you like. As mentioned, it is perfectly acceptable to use a subclass as a superclass of another. For example, given three classes called **A**, **B**, and **C**, **C** can be a subclass of **B**, which is a subclass of **A**. When this type of situation occurs, each subclass inherits all of the traits found in all of its superclasses. In this case, **C** inherits all aspects of **B** and **A**. To see how a multilevel hierarchy can be useful, consider the following program. In it, the subclass **BoxWeight** is used as a superclass to create the subclass called **Shipment**. **Shipment** inherits all of the traits of **BoxWeight** and **Box**, and adds a field called **cost**, which holds the cost of shipping such a parcel.

```
// Extend BoxWeight to include shipping costs.

// Start with Box.
class Box {
    private double width;
    private double height;
    private double depth;
```

```
// construct clone of an object
Box(Box ob) { // pass object to constructor
    width = ob.width;
    height = ob.height;
    depth = ob.depth;
}

// constructor used when all dimensions specified
Box(double w, double h, double d) {
    width = w;
    height = h;
    depth = d;
}

// constructor used when no dimensions specified
Box() {
    width = -1; // use -1 to indicate
    height = -1; // an uninitialized
    depth = -1; // box
}

// constructor used when cube is created
Box(double len) {
    width = height = depth = len;
}

// compute and return volume
double volume() {
    return width * height * depth;
}
}

// Add weight.
class BoxWeight extends Box {
    double weight; // weight of box

    // construct clone of an object
    BoxWeight(BoxWeight ob) { // pass object to constructor
        super(ob);
        weight = ob.weight;
    }
    // constructor when all parameters are specified
    BoxWeight(double w, double h, double d, double m) {
        super(w, h, d); // call superclass constructor
        weight = m;
    }
}

// default constructor
BoxWeight() {
    super();
    weight = -1;
}
}
```

```

// constructor used when cube is created
BoxWeight(double len, double m) {
    super(len);
    weight = m;
}
}

// Add shipping costs.
class Shipment extends BoxWeight {
    double cost;

    // construct clone of an object
    Shipment(Shipment ob) { // pass object to constructor
        super(ob);
        cost = ob.cost;
    }

    // constructor when all parameters are specified
    Shipment(double w, double h, double d,
              double m, double c) {
        super(w, h, d, m); // call superclass constructor
        cost = c;
    }

    // default constructor
    Shipment() {
        super();
        cost = -1;
    }

    // constructor used when cube is created
    Shipment(double len, double m, double c) {
        super(len, m);
        cost = c;
    }
}

class DemoShipment {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Shipment shipment1 =
            new Shipment(10, 20, 15, 10, 3.41);
        Shipment shipment2 =
            new Shipment(2, 3, 4, 0.76, 1.28);

        double vol;

        vol = shipment1.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of shipment1 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of shipment1 is "
            + shipment1.weight);
        System.out.println("Shipping cost: $" + shipment1.cost);
        System.out.println();
    }
}

```

```

        vol = shipment2.volume();
        System.out.println("Volume of shipment2 is " + vol);
        System.out.println("Weight of shipment2 is "
            + shipment2.weight);
        System.out.println("Shipping cost: $" + shipment2.cost);
    }
}

```

The output of this program is shown here:

```

Volume of shipment1 is 3000.0
Weight of shipment1 is 10.0
Shipping cost: $3.41

```

```

Volume of shipment2 is 24.0
Weight of shipment2 is 0.76
Shipping cost: $1.28

```

Because of inheritance, **Shipment** can make use of the previously defined classes of **Box** and **BoxWeight**, adding only the extra information it needs for its own, specific application. This is part of the value of inheritance; it allows the reuse of code.

This example illustrates one other important point: **super()** always refers to the constructor in the closest superclass. The **super()** in **Shipment** calls the constructor in **BoxWeight**. The **super()** in **BoxWeight** calls the constructor in **Box**. In a class hierarchy, if a superclass constructor requires parameters, then all subclasses must pass those parameters “up the line.” This is true whether or not a subclass needs parameters of its own.

NOTE *In the preceding program, the entire class hierarchy, including **Box**, **BoxWeight**, and **Shipment**, is shown all in one file. This is for your convenience only. In Java, all three classes could have been placed into their own files and compiled separately. In fact, using separate files is the norm, not the exception, in creating class hierarchies.*

When Constructors Are Called

When a class hierarchy is created, in what order are the constructors for the classes that make up the hierarchy called? For example, given a subclass called **B** and a superclass called **A**, is **A**'s constructor called before **B**'s, or vice versa? The answer is that in a class hierarchy, constructors are called in order of derivation, from superclass to subclass. Further, since **super()** must be the first statement executed in a subclass' constructor, this order is the same whether or not **super()** is used. If **super()** is not used, then the default or parameterless constructor of each superclass will be executed. The following program illustrates when constructors are executed:

```

// Demonstrate when constructors are called.

// Create a super class.
class A {
    A() {
        System.out.println("Inside A's constructor.");
    }
}

```

```
// Create a subclass by extending class A.
class B extends A {
    B() {
        System.out.println("Inside B's constructor.");
    }
}

// Create another subclass by extending B.
class C extends B {
    C() {
        System.out.println("Inside C's constructor.");
    }
}

class CallingCons {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        C c = new C();
    }
}
```

The output from this program is shown here:

```
Inside A's constructor
Inside B's constructor
Inside C's constructor
```

As you can see, the constructors are called in order of derivation.

If you think about it, it makes sense that constructors are executed in order of derivation. Because a superclass has no knowledge of any subclass, any initialization it needs to perform is separate from and possibly prerequisite to any initialization performed by the subclass. Therefore, it must be executed first.

Method Overriding

In a class hierarchy, when a method in a subclass has the same name and type signature as a method in its superclass, then the method in the subclass is said to *override* the method in the superclass. When an overridden method is called from within a subclass, it will always refer to the version of that method defined by the subclass. The version of the method defined by the superclass will be hidden. Consider the following:

```
// Method overriding.
class A {
    int i, j;
    A(int a, int b) {
        i = a;
        j = b;
    }

    // display i and j
    void show() {
        System.out.println("i and j: " + i + " " + j);
    }
}
```

```

class B extends A {
    int k;

    B(int a, int b, int c) {
        super(a, b);
        k = c;
    }

    // display k - this overrides show() in A
    void show() {
        System.out.println("k: " + k);
    }
}

class Override {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B subObj = new B(1, 2, 3);

        subObj.show(); // this calls show() in B
    }
}

```

The output produced by this program is shown here:

```
k: 3
```

When **show()** is invoked on an object of type **B**, the version of **show()** defined within **B** is used. That is, the version of **show()** inside **B** overrides the version declared in **A**.

If you wish to access the superclass version of an overridden method, you can do so by using **super**. For example, in this version of **B**, the superclass version of **show()** is invoked within the subclass' version. This allows all instance variables to be displayed.

```

class B extends A {
    int k;

    B(int a, int b, int c) {
        super(a, b);
        k = c;
    }
    void show() {
        super.show(); // this calls A's show()
        System.out.println("k: " + k);
    }
}

```

If you substitute this version of **A** into the previous program, you will see the following output:

```
i and j: 1 2
k: 3
```

Here, **super.show()** calls the superclass version of **show()**.

Method overriding occurs *only* when the names and the type signatures of the two methods are identical. If they are not, then the two methods are simply overloaded. For example, consider this modified version of the preceding example:

```
// Methods with differing type signatures are overloaded - not
// overridden.
class A {
    int i, j;

    A(int a, int b) {
        i = a;
        j = b;
    }

    // display i and j
    void show() {
        System.out.println("i and j: " + i + " " + j);
    }
}

// Create a subclass by extending class A.
class B extends A {
    int k;

    B(int a, int b, int c) {
        super(a, b);
        k = c;
    }

    // overload show()
    void show(String msg) {
        System.out.println(msg + k);
    }
}

class Override {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B subOb = new B(1, 2, 3);

        subOb.show("This is k: "); // this calls show() in B
        subOb.show(); // this calls show() in A
    }
}
```

The output produced by this program is shown here:

```
This is k: 3
i and j: 1 2
```

The version of `show()` in **B** takes a string parameter. This makes its type signature different from the one in **A**, which takes no parameters. Therefore, no overriding (or name hiding) takes place. Instead, the version of `show()` in **B** simply overloads the version of `show()` in **A**.

Dynamic Method Dispatch

While the examples in the preceding section demonstrate the mechanics of method overriding, they do not show its power. Indeed, if there were nothing more to method overriding than a name space convention, then it would be, at best, an interesting curiosity, but of little real value. However, this is not the case. Method overriding forms the basis for one of Java's most powerful concepts: *dynamic method dispatch*. Dynamic method dispatch is the mechanism by which a call to an overridden method is resolved at run time, rather than compile time. Dynamic method dispatch is important because this is how Java implements run-time polymorphism.

Let's begin by restating an important principle: a superclass reference variable can refer to a subclass object. Java uses this fact to resolve calls to overridden methods at run time. Here is how. When an overridden method is called through a superclass reference, Java determines which version of that method to execute based upon the type of the object being referred to at the time the call occurs. Thus, this determination is made at run time. When different types of objects are referred to, different versions of an overridden method will be called. In other words, *it is the type of the object being referred to* (not the type of the reference variable) that determines which version of an overridden method will be executed. Therefore, if a superclass contains a method that is overridden by a subclass, then when different types of objects are referred to through a superclass reference variable, different versions of the method are executed.

Here is an example that illustrates dynamic method dispatch:

```
// Dynamic Method Dispatch
class A {
    void callme() {
        System.out.println("Inside A's callme method");
    }
}

class B extends A {
    // override callme()
    void callme() {
        System.out.println("Inside B's callme method");
    }
}

class C extends A {
    // override callme()
    void callme() {
        System.out.println("Inside C's callme method");
    }
}

class Dispatch {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        A a = new A(); // object of type A
        B b = new B(); // object of type B
        C c = new C(); // object of type C
        A r; // obtain a reference of type A
    }
}
```

```
r = a; // r refers to an A object
r.callme(); // calls A's version of callme

r = b; // r refers to a B object
r.callme(); // calls B's version of callme

r = c; // r refers to a C object
r.callme(); // calls C's version of callme
}
}
```

The output from the program is shown here:

```
Inside A's callme method
Inside B's callme method
Inside C's callme method
```

This program creates one superclass called **A** and two subclasses of it, called **B** and **C**. Subclasses **B** and **C** override `callme()` declared in **A**. Inside the `main()` method, objects of type **A**, **B**, and **C** are declared. Also, a reference of type **A**, called `r`, is declared. The program then in turn assigns a reference to each type of object to `r` and uses that reference to invoke `callme()`. As the output shows, the version of `callme()` executed is determined by the type of object being referred to at the time of the call. Had it been determined by the type of the reference variable, `r`, you would see three calls to **A**'s `callme()` method.

NOTE Readers familiar with C++ or C# will recognize that overridden methods in Java are similar to virtual functions in those languages.

Why Overridden Methods?

As stated earlier, overridden methods allow Java to support run-time polymorphism. Polymorphism is essential to object-oriented programming for one reason: it allows a general class to specify methods that will be common to all of its derivatives, while allowing subclasses to define the specific implementation of some or all of those methods. Overridden methods are another way that Java implements the “one interface, multiple methods” aspect of polymorphism.

Part of the key to successfully applying polymorphism is understanding that the superclasses and subclasses form a hierarchy which moves from lesser to greater specialization. Used correctly, the superclass provides all elements that a subclass can use directly. It also defines those methods that the derived class must implement on its own. This allows the subclass the flexibility to define its own methods, yet still enforces a consistent interface. Thus, by combining inheritance with overridden methods, a superclass can define the general form of the methods that will be used by all of its subclasses.

Dynamic, run-time polymorphism is one of the most powerful mechanisms that object-oriented design brings to bear on code reuse and robustness. The ability of existing code libraries to call methods on instances of new classes without recompiling while maintaining a clean abstract interface is a profoundly powerful tool.

Applying Method Overriding

Let's look at a more practical example that uses method overriding. The following program creates a superclass called **Figure** that stores the dimensions of a two-dimensional object. It also defines a method called **area()** that computes the area of an object. The program derives two subclasses from **Figure**. The first is **Rectangle** and the second is **Triangle**. Each of these subclasses overrides **area()** so that it returns the area of a rectangle and a triangle, respectively.

```
// Using run-time polymorphism.
class Figure {
    double dim1;
    double dim2;

    Figure(double a, double b) {
        dim1 = a;
        dim2 = b;
    }

    double area() {
        System.out.println("Area for Figure is undefined.");
        return 0;
    }
}

class Rectangle extends Figure {
    Rectangle(double a, double b) {
        super(a, b);
    }

    // override area for rectangle
    double area() {
        System.out.println("Inside Area for Rectangle.");
        return dim1 * dim2;
    }
}

class Triangle extends Figure {
    Triangle(double a, double b) {
        super(a, b);
    }

    // override area for right triangle
    double area() {
        System.out.println("Inside Area for Triangle.");
        return dim1 * dim2 / 2;
    }
}

class FindAreas {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Figure f = new Figure(10, 10);
        Rectangle r = new Rectangle(9, 5);
        Triangle t = new Triangle(10, 8);
    }
}
```

```
Figure figref;

figref = r;
System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());

figref = t;
System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());

figref = f;
System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());
}
}
```

The output from the program is shown here:

```
Inside Area for Rectangle.
Area is 45
Inside Area for Triangle.
Area is 40
Area for Figure is undefined.
Area is 0
```

Through the dual mechanisms of inheritance and run-time polymorphism, it is possible to define one consistent interface that is used by several different, yet related, types of objects. In this case, if an object is derived from **Figure**, then its area can be obtained by calling `area()`. The interface to this operation is the same no matter what type of figure is being used.

Using Abstract Classes

There are situations in which you will want to define a superclass that declares the structure of a given abstraction without providing a complete implementation of every method. That is, sometimes you will want to create a superclass that only defines a generalized form that will be shared by all of its subclasses, leaving it to each subclass to fill in the details. Such a class determines the nature of the methods that the subclasses must implement. One way this situation can occur is when a superclass is unable to create a meaningful implementation for a method. This is the case with the class **Figure** used in the preceding example. The definition of `area()` is simply a placeholder. It will not compute and display the area of any type of object.

As you will see as you create your own class libraries, it is not uncommon for a method to have no meaningful definition in the context of its superclass. You can handle this situation two ways. One way, as shown in the previous example, is to simply have it report a warning message. While this approach can be useful in certain situations—such as debugging—it is not usually appropriate. You may have methods that must be overridden by the subclass in order for the subclass to have any meaning. Consider the class **Triangle**. It has no meaning if `area()` is not defined. In this case, you want some way to ensure that a subclass does, indeed, override all necessary methods. Java's solution to this problem is the *abstract method*.

You can require that certain methods be overridden by subclasses by specifying the **abstract** type modifier. These methods are sometimes referred to as *subclasser responsibility* because they have no implementation specified in the superclass. Thus, a subclass must

override them—it cannot simply use the version defined in the superclass. To declare an abstract method, use this general form:

```
abstract type name(parameter-list);
```

As you can see, no method body is present.

Any class that contains one or more abstract methods must also be declared abstract. To declare a class abstract, you simply use the **abstract** keyword in front of the **class** keyword at the beginning of the class declaration. There can be no objects of an abstract class. That is, an abstract class cannot be directly instantiated with the **new** operator. Such objects would be useless, because an abstract class is not fully defined. Also, you cannot declare abstract constructors, or abstract static methods. Any subclass of an abstract class must either implement all of the abstract methods in the superclass, or be itself declared **abstract**.

Here is a simple example of a class with an abstract method, followed by a class which implements that method:

```
// A Simple demonstration of abstract.
abstract class A {
    abstract void callme();

    // concrete methods are still allowed in abstract classes
    void callmetoo() {
        System.out.println("This is a concrete method.");
    }
}

class B extends A {
    void callme() {
        System.out.println("B's implementation of callme.");
    }
}

class AbstractDemo {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        B b = new B();

        b.callme();
        b.callmetoo();
    }
}
```

Notice that no objects of class **A** are declared in the program. As mentioned, it is not possible to instantiate an abstract class. One other point: class **A** implements a concrete method called **callmetoo()**. This is perfectly acceptable. Abstract classes can include as much implementation as they see fit.

Although abstract classes cannot be used to instantiate objects, they can be used to create object references, because Java's approach to run-time polymorphism is implemented through the use of superclass references. Thus, it must be possible to create a reference to an abstract class so that it can be used to point to a subclass object. You will see this feature put to use in the next example.

Using an abstract class, you can improve the **Figure** class shown earlier. Since there is no meaningful concept of area for an undefined two-dimensional figure, the following version of the program declares **area()** as abstract inside **Figure**. This, of course, means that all classes derived from **Figure** must override **area()**.

```
// Using abstract methods and classes.
abstract class Figure {
    double dim1;
    double dim2;

    Figure(double a, double b) {
        dim1 = a;
        dim2 = b;
    }

    // area is now an abstract method
    abstract double area();
}

class Rectangle extends Figure {
    Rectangle(double a, double b) {
        super(a, b);
    }

    // override area for rectangle
    double area() {
        System.out.println("Inside Area for Rectangle.");
        return dim1 * dim2;
    }
}

class Triangle extends Figure {
    Triangle(double a, double b) {
        super(a, b);
    }

    // override area for right triangle
    double area() {
        System.out.println("Inside Area for Triangle.");
        return dim1 * dim2 / 2;
    }
}

class AbstractAreas {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        // Figure f = new Figure(10, 10); // illegal now
        Rectangle r = new Rectangle(9, 5);
        Triangle t = new Triangle(10, 8);
        Figure figref; // this is OK, no object is created

        figref = r;
        System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());
    }
}
```

```

    figref = t;
    System.out.println("Area is " + figref.area());
}
}

```

As the comment inside `main()` indicates, it is no longer possible to declare objects of type `Figure`, since it is now abstract. And, all subclasses of `Figure` must override `area()`. To prove this to yourself, try creating a subclass that does not override `area()`. You will receive a compile-time error.

Although it is not possible to create an object of type `Figure`, you can create a reference variable of type `Figure`. The variable `figref` is declared as a reference to `Figure`, which means that it can be used to refer to an object of any class derived from `Figure`. As explained, it is through superclass reference variables that overridden methods are resolved at run time.

Using final with Inheritance

The keyword `final` has three uses. First, it can be used to create the equivalent of a named constant. This use was described in the preceding chapter. The other two uses of `final` apply to inheritance. Both are examined here.

Using final to Prevent Overriding

While method overriding is one of Java's most powerful features, there will be times when you will want to prevent it from occurring. To disallow a method from being overridden, specify `final` as a modifier at the start of its declaration. Methods declared as `final` cannot be overridden. The following fragment illustrates `final`:

```

class A {
    final void meth() {
        System.out.println("This is a final method.");
    }
}

class B extends A {
    void meth() { // ERROR! Can't override.
        System.out.println("Illegal!");
    }
}

```

Because `meth()` is declared as `final`, it cannot be overridden in `B`. If you attempt to do so, a compile-time error will result.

Methods declared as `final` can sometimes provide a performance enhancement: The compiler is free to *inline* calls to them because it “knows” they will not be overridden by a subclass. When a small `final` method is called, often the Java compiler can copy the bytecode for the subroutine directly inline with the compiled code of the calling method, thus eliminating the costly overhead associated with a method call. Inlining is only an option with `final` methods. Normally, Java resolves calls to methods dynamically, at run time. This is called *late binding*. However, since `final` methods cannot be overridden, a call to one can be resolved at compile time. This is called *early binding*.

Using final to Prevent Inheritance

Sometimes you will want to prevent a class from being inherited. To do this, precede the class declaration with **final**. Declaring a class as **final** implicitly declares all of its methods as **final**, too. As you might expect, it is illegal to declare a class as both **abstract** and **final** since an abstract class is incomplete by itself and relies upon its subclasses to provide complete implementations.

Here is an example of a **final** class:

```
final class A {
    // ...
}

// The following class is illegal.
class B extends A { // ERROR! Can't subclass A
    // ...
}
```

As the comments imply, it is illegal for **B** to inherit **A** since **A** is declared as **final**.

The Object Class

There is one special class, **Object**, defined by Java. All other classes are subclasses of **Object**. That is, **Object** is a superclass of all other classes. This means that a reference variable of type **Object** can refer to an object of any other class. Also, since arrays are implemented as classes, a variable of type **Object** can also refer to any array.

Object defines the following methods, which means that they are available in every object.

Method	Purpose
Object clone()	Creates a new object that is the same as the object being cloned.
boolean equals(Object <i>object</i>)	Determines whether one object is equal to another.
void finalize()	Called before an unused object is recycled.
Class getClass()	Obtains the class of an object at run time.
int hashCode()	Returns the hash code associated with the invoking object.
void notify()	Resumes execution of a thread waiting on the invoking object.
void notifyAll()	Resumes execution of all threads waiting on the invoking object.
String toString()	Returns a string that describes the object.
void wait() void wait(long <i>milliseconds</i>) void wait(long <i>milliseconds</i> , int <i>nanoseconds</i>)	Waits on another thread of execution.

The methods **getClass()**, **notify()**, **notifyAll()**, and **wait()** are declared as **final**. You may override the others. These methods are described elsewhere in this book. However, notice two methods now: **equals()** and **toString()**. The **equals()** method compares the contents of two objects. It returns **true** if the objects are equivalent, and **false** otherwise.

The precise definition of equality can vary, depending on the type of objects being compared. The `toString()` method returns a string that contains a description of the object on which it is called. Also, this method is automatically called when an object is output using `println()`. Many classes override this method. Doing so allows them to tailor a description specifically for the types of objects that they create.

Exception Handling

This chapter examines Java's exception-handling mechanism. An *exception* is an abnormal condition that arises in a code sequence at run time. In other words, an exception is a run-time error. In computer languages that do not support exception handling, errors must be checked and handled manually—typically through the use of error codes, and so on. This approach is as cumbersome as it is troublesome. Java's exception handling avoids these problems and, in the process, brings run-time error management into the object-oriented world.

Exception-Handling Fundamentals

A Java exception is an object that describes an exceptional (that is, error) condition that has occurred in a piece of code. When an exceptional condition arises, an object representing that exception is created and *thrown* in the method that caused the error. That method may choose to handle the exception itself, or pass it on. Either way, at some point, the exception is *caught* and processed. Exceptions can be generated by the Java run-time system, or they can be manually generated by your code. Exceptions thrown by Java relate to fundamental errors that violate the rules of the Java language or the constraints of the Java execution environment. Manually generated exceptions are typically used to report some error condition to the caller of a method.

Java exception handling is managed via five keywords: **try**, **catch**, **throw**, **throws**, and **finally**. Briefly, here is how they work. Program statements that you want to monitor for exceptions are contained within a **try** block. If an exception occurs within the **try** block, it is thrown. Your code can catch this exception (using **catch**) and handle it in some rational manner. System-generated exceptions are automatically thrown by the Java run-time system. To manually throw an exception, use the keyword **throw**. Any exception that is thrown out of a method must be specified as such by a **throws** clause. Any code that absolutely must be executed after a **try** block completes is put in a **finally** block.

This is the general form of an exception-handling block:

```
try {  
    // block of code to monitor for errors  
}
```

```

catch (ExceptionType1 exOb) {
    // exception handler for ExceptionType1
}

catch (ExceptionType2 exOb) {
    // exception handler for ExceptionType2
}
// ...
finally {
    // block of code to be executed after try block ends
}

```

Here, *ExceptionType* is the type of exception that has occurred. The remainder of this chapter describes how to apply this framework.

Exception Types

All exception types are subclasses of the built-in class **Throwable**. Thus, **Throwable** is at the top of the exception class hierarchy. Immediately below **Throwable** are two subclasses that partition exceptions into two distinct branches. One branch is headed by **Exception**. This class is used for exceptional conditions that user programs should catch. This is also the class that you will subclass to create your own custom exception types. There is an important subclass of **Exception**, called **RuntimeException**. Exceptions of this type are automatically defined for the programs that you write and include things such as division by zero and invalid array indexing.

The other branch is topped by **Error**, which defines exceptions that are not expected to be caught under normal circumstances by your program. Exceptions of type **Error** are used by the Java run-time system to indicate errors having to do with the run-time environment, itself. Stack overflow is an example of such an error. This chapter will not be dealing with exceptions of type **Error**, because these are typically created in response to catastrophic failures that cannot usually be handled by your program.

Uncaught Exceptions

Before you learn how to handle exceptions in your program, it is useful to see what happens when you don't handle them. This small program includes an expression that intentionally causes a divide-by-zero error:

```

class Exc0 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        int d = 0;
        int a = 42 / d;
    }
}

```

When the Java run-time system detects the attempt to divide by zero, it constructs a new exception object and then *throws* this exception. This causes the execution of **Exc0** to

stop, because once an exception has been thrown, it must be *caught* by an exception handler and dealt with immediately. In this example, we haven't supplied any exception handlers of our own, so the exception is caught by the default handler provided by the Java run-time system. Any exception that is not caught by your program will ultimately be processed by the default handler. The default handler displays a string describing the exception, prints a stack trace from the point at which the exception occurred, and terminates the program.

Here is the exception generated when this example is executed:

```
java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero
    at Exc0.main(Exc0.java:4)
```

Notice how the class name, **Exc0**; the method name, **main**; the filename, **Exc0.java**; and the line number, **4**, are all included in the simple stack trace. Also, notice that the type of exception thrown is a subclass of **Exception** called **ArithmeticException**, which more specifically describes what type of error happened. As discussed later in this chapter, Java supplies several built-in exception types that match the various sorts of run-time errors that can be generated.

The stack trace will always show the sequence of method invocations that led up to the error. For example, here is another version of the preceding program that introduces the same error but in a method separate from **main()**:

```
class Exc1 {
    static void subroutine() {
        int d = 0;
        int a = 10 / d;
    }
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        Exc1.subroutine();
    }
}
```

The resulting stack trace from the default exception handler shows how the entire call stack is displayed:

```
java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero
    at Exc1.subroutine(Exc1.java:4)
    at Exc1.main(Exc1.java:7)
```

As you can see, the bottom of the stack is **main**'s line 7, which is the call to **subroutine()**, which caused the exception at line 4. The call stack is quite useful for debugging, because it pinpoints the precise sequence of steps that led to the error.

Using try and catch

Although the default exception handler provided by the Java run-time system is useful for debugging, you will usually want to handle an exception yourself. Doing so provides two benefits. First, it allows you to fix the error. Second, it prevents the program from automatically terminating. Most users would be confused (to say the least) if your program stopped

running and printed a stack trace whenever an error occurred! Fortunately, it is quite easy to prevent this.

To guard against and handle a run-time error, simply enclose the code that you want to monitor inside a **try** block. Immediately following the **try** block, include a **catch** clause that specifies the exception type that you wish to catch. To illustrate how easily this can be done, the following program includes a **try** block and a **catch** clause that processes the **ArithmeticException** generated by the division-by-zero error:

```
class Exc2 {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        int d, a;

        try { // monitor a block of code.
            d = 0;
            a = 42 / d;
            System.out.println("This will not be printed.");
        } catch (ArithmeticException e) { // catch divide-by-zero error
            System.out.println("Division by zero.");
        }
        System.out.println("After catch statement.");
    }
}
```

This program generates the following output:

```
Division by zero.
After catch statement.
```

Notice that the call to **println()** inside the **try** block is never executed. Once an exception is thrown, program control transfers out of the **try** block into the **catch** block. Put differently, **catch** is not “called,” so execution never “returns” to the **try** block from a **catch**. Thus, the line “This will not be printed.” is not displayed. Once the **catch** statement has executed, program control continues with the next line in the program following the entire **try/catch** mechanism.

A **try** and its **catch** statement form a unit. The scope of the **catch** clause is restricted to those statements specified by the immediately preceding **try** statement. A **catch** statement cannot catch an exception thrown by another **try** statement (except in the case of nested **try** statements, described shortly). The statements that are protected by **try** must be surrounded by curly braces. (That is, they must be within a block.) You cannot use **try** on a single statement.

The goal of most well-constructed **catch** clauses should be to resolve the exceptional condition and then continue on as if the error had never happened. For example, in the next program each iteration of the **for** loop obtains two random integers. Those two integers are divided by each other, and the result is used to divide the value 12345. The final result is put into **a**. If either division operation causes a divide-by-zero error, it is caught, the value of **a** is set to zero, and the program continues.

```
// Handle an exception and move on.
import java.util.Random;

class HandleError {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
```

```

int a=0, b=0, c=0;
Random r = new Random();

for(int i=0; i<32000; i++) {
    try {
        b = r.nextInt();
        c = r.nextInt();
        a = 12345 / (b/c);
    } catch (ArithmeticException e) {
        System.out.println("Division by zero.");
        a = 0; // set a to zero and continue
    }
    System.out.println("a: " + a);
}
}
}

```

Displaying a Description of an Exception

Throwable overrides the `toString()` method (defined by **Object**) so that it returns a string containing a description of the exception. You can display this description in a `println()` statement by simply passing the exception as an argument. For example, the `catch` block in the preceding program can be rewritten like this:

```

catch (ArithmeticException e) {
    System.out.println("Exception: " + e);
    a = 0; // set a to zero and continue
}

```

When this version is substituted in the program, and the program is run, each divide-by-zero error displays the following message:

```
Exception: java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero
```

While it is of no particular value in this context, the ability to display a description of an exception is valuable in other circumstances—particularly when you are experimenting with exceptions or when you are debugging.

Multiple catch Clauses

In some cases, more than one exception could be raised by a single piece of code. To handle this type of situation, you can specify two or more `catch` clauses, each catching a different type of exception. When an exception is thrown, each `catch` statement is inspected in order, and the first one whose type matches that of the exception is executed. After one `catch` statement executes, the others are bypassed, and execution continues after the `try/catch` block. The following example traps two different exception types:

```

// Demonstrate multiple catch statements.
class MultiCatch {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {

```

```

    int a = args.length;
    System.out.println("a = " + a);
    int b = 42 / a;
    int c[] = { 1 };
    c[42] = 99;
} catch(ArithmeticException e) {
    System.out.println("Divide by 0: " + e);
} catch(ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException e) {
    System.out.println("Array index oob: " + e);
}
System.out.println("After try/catch blocks.");
}
}

```

This program will cause a division-by-zero exception if it is started with no command-line arguments, since `a` will equal zero. It will survive the division if you provide a command-line argument, setting `a` to something larger than zero. But it will cause an **ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException**, since the `int` array `c` has a length of 1, yet the program attempts to assign a value to `c[42]`.

Here is the output generated by running it both ways:

```

C:\>java MultiCatch
a = 0
Divide by 0: java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero
After try/catch blocks.

```

```

C:\>java MultiCatch TestArg
a = 1
Array index oob: java.lang.ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException:42
After try/catch blocks.

```

When you use multiple **catch** statements, it is important to remember that exception subclasses must come before any of their superclasses. This is because a **catch** statement that uses a superclass will catch exceptions of that type plus any of its subclasses. Thus, a subclass would never be reached if it came after its superclass. Further, in Java, unreachable code is an error. For example, consider the following program:

```

/* This program contains an error.

A subclass must come before its superclass in
a series of catch statements. If not,
unreachable code will be created and a
compile-time error will result.
*/
class SuperSubCatch {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {
            int a = 0;
            int b = 42 / a;
        } catch(Exception e) {

```



```

        System.out.println("Generic Exception catch.");
    }
    /* This catch is never reached because
    ArithmeticException is a subclass of Exception. */
    catch(ArithmeticException e) { // ERROR - unreachable
        System.out.println("This is never reached.");
    }
}
}
}

```

If you try to compile this program, you will receive an error message stating that the second **catch** statement is unreachable because the exception has already been caught. Since **ArithmeticException** is a subclass of **Exception**, the first **catch** statement will handle all **Exception**-based errors, including **ArithmeticException**. This means that the second **catch** statement will never execute. To fix the problem, reverse the order of the **catch** statements.

Nested try Statements

The **try** statement can be nested. That is, a **try** statement can be inside the block of another **try**. Each time a **try** statement is entered, the context of that exception is pushed on the stack. If an inner **try** statement does not have a **catch** handler for a particular exception, the stack is unwound and the next **try** statement's **catch** handlers are inspected for a match. This continues until one of the **catch** statements succeeds, or until all of the nested **try** statements are exhausted. If no **catch** statement matches, then the Java run-time system will handle the exception. Here is an example that uses nested **try** statements:

```

// An example of nested try statements.
class NestTry {
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {
            int a = args.length;

            /* If no command-line args are present,
            the following statement will generate
            a divide-by-zero exception. */
            int b = 42 / a;

            System.out.println("a = " + a);

            try { // nested try block
                /* If one command-line arg is used,
                then a divide-by-zero exception
                will be generated by the following code. */
                if(a==1) a = a/(a-a); // division by zero

                /* If two command-line args are used,
                then generate an out-of-bounds exception. */
                if(a==2) {
                    int c[] = { 1 };
                }
            }
        }
    }
}

```

```

        c[42] = 99; // generate an out-of-bounds exception
    }
} catch(ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException e) {
    System.out.println("Array index out-of-bounds: " + e);
}

} catch(ArithmeticException e) {
    System.out.println("Divide by 0: " + e);
}
}
}

```

As you can see, this program nests one **try** block within another. The program works as follows. When you execute the program with no command-line arguments, a divide-by-zero exception is generated by the outer **try** block. Execution of the program with one command-line argument generates a divide-by-zero exception from within the nested **try** block. Since the inner block does not catch this exception, it is passed on to the outer **try** block, where it is handled. If you execute the program with two command-line arguments, an array boundary exception is generated from within the inner **try** block. Here are sample runs that illustrate each case:

```

C:\>java NestTry
Divide by 0: java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero

C:\>java NestTry One
a = 1
Divide by 0: java.lang.ArithmeticException: / by zero

C:\>java NestTry One Two
a = 2
Array index out-of-bounds:
    java.lang.ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException:42

```

Nesting of **try** statements can occur in less obvious ways when method calls are involved. For example, you can enclose a call to a method within a **try** block. Inside that method is another **try** statement. In this case, the **try** within the method is still nested inside the outer **try** block, which calls the method. Here is the previous program recoded so that the nested **try** block is moved inside the method **nesttry()**:

```

/* Try statements can be implicitly nested via
   calls to methods. */
class MethNestTry {
    static void nesttry(int a) {
        try { // nested try block
            /* If one command-line arg is used,
               then a divide-by-zero exception
               will be generated by the following code. */
            if(a==1) a = a/(a-a); // division by zero
        }
    }
}

```

```

    /* If two command-line args are used,
       then generate an out-of-bounds exception. */
    if(a==2) {
        int c[] = { 1 };
        c[42] = 99; // generate an out-of-bounds exception
    }
    catch(ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException e) {
        System.out.println("Array index out-of-bounds: " + e);
    }
}

public static void main(String args[]) {
    try {
        int a = args.length;

        /* If no command-line args are present,
           the following statement will generate
           a divide-by-zero exception. */
        int b = 42 / a;
        System.out.println("a = " + a);

        nesttry(a);
    } catch(ArithmeticException e) {
        System.out.println("Divide by 0: " + e);
    }
}
}

```

The output of this program is identical to that of the preceding example.

throw

So far, you have only been catching exceptions that are thrown by the Java run-time system. However, it is possible for your program to throw an exception explicitly, using the **throw** statement. The general form of **throw** is shown here:

```
throw ThrowableInstance;
```

Here, *ThrowableInstance* must be an object of type **Throwable** or a subclass of **Throwable**. Primitive types, such as **int** or **char**, as well as non-**Throwable** classes, such as **String** and **Object**, cannot be used as exceptions. There are two ways you can obtain a **Throwable** object: using a parameter in a **catch** clause, or creating one with the **new** operator.

The flow of execution stops immediately after the **throw** statement; any subsequent statements are not executed. The nearest enclosing **try** block is inspected to see if it has a **catch** statement that matches the type of exception. If it does find a match, control is transferred to that statement. If not, then the next enclosing **try** statement is inspected, and so on. If no matching **catch** is found, then the default exception handler halts the program and prints the stack trace.

Here is a sample program that creates and throws an exception. The handler that catches the exception rethrows it to the outer handler.

```
// Demonstrate throw.
class ThrowDemo {
    static void demoproc() {
        try {
            throw new NullPointerException("demo");
        } catch(NullPointerException e) {
            System.out.println("Caught inside demoproc.");
            throw e; // rethrow the exception
        }
    }

    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {
            demoproc();
        } catch(NullPointerException e) {
            System.out.println("Recaught: " + e);
        }
    }
}
```

This program gets two chances to deal with the same error. First, **main()** sets up an exception context and then calls **demoproc()**. The **demoproc()** method then sets up another exception-handling context and immediately throws a new instance of **NullPointerException**, which is caught on the next line. The exception is then rethrown. Here is the resulting output:

```
Caught inside demoproc.
Recaught: java.lang.NullPointerException: demo
```

The program also illustrates how to create one of Java's standard exception objects. Pay close attention to this line:

```
throw new NullPointerException("demo");
```

Here, **new** is used to construct an instance of **NullPointerException**. Many of Java's built-in run-time exceptions have at least two constructors: one with no parameter and one that takes a string parameter. When the second form is used, the argument specifies a string that describes the exception. This string is displayed when the object is used as an argument to **print()** or **println()**. It can also be obtained by a call to **getMessage()**, which is defined by **Throwable**.

throws

If a method is capable of causing an exception that it does not handle, it must specify this behavior so that callers of the method can guard themselves against that exception. You do this by including a **throws** clause in the method's declaration. A **throws** clause lists the types of exceptions that a method might throw. This is necessary for all exceptions, except those of

type **Error** or **RuntimeException**, or any of their subclasses. All other exceptions that a method can throw must be declared in the **throws** clause. If they are not, a compile-time error will result.

This is the general form of a method declaration that includes a **throws** clause:

```
type method-name(parameter-list) throws exception-list
{
    // body of method
}
```

Here, *exception-list* is a comma-separated list of the exceptions that a method can throw.

Following is an example of an incorrect program that tries to throw an exception that it does not catch. Because the program does not specify a **throws** clause to declare this fact, the program will not compile.

```
// This program contains an error and will not compile.
class ThrowsDemo {
    static void throwOne() {
        System.out.println("Inside throwOne.");
        throw new IllegalAccessException("demo");
    }
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        throwOne();
    }
}
```

To make this example compile, you need to make two changes. First, you need to declare that **throwOne()** throws **IllegalAccessException**. Second, **main()** must define a **try/catch** statement that catches this exception.

The corrected example is shown here:

```
// This is now correct.
class ThrowsDemo {
    static void throwOne() throws IllegalAccessException {
        System.out.println("Inside throwOne.");
        throw new IllegalAccessException("demo");
    }
    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {
            throwOne();
        } catch (IllegalAccessException e) {
            System.out.println("Caught " + e);
        }
    }
}
```

Here is the output generated by running this example program:

```
inside throwOne
caught java.lang.IllegalAccessException: demo
```

finally

When exceptions are thrown, execution in a method takes a rather abrupt, nonlinear path that alters the normal flow through the method. Depending upon how the method is coded, it is even possible for an exception to cause the method to return prematurely. This could be a problem in some methods. For example, if a method opens a file upon entry and closes it upon exit, then you will not want the code that closes the file to be bypassed by the exception-handling mechanism. The **finally** keyword is designed to address this contingency.

finally creates a block of code that will be executed after a **try/catch** block has completed and before the code following the **try/catch** block. The **finally** block will execute whether or not an exception is thrown. If an exception is thrown, the **finally** block will execute even if no **catch** statement matches the exception. Any time a method is about to return to the caller from inside a **try/catch** block, via an uncaught exception or an explicit return statement, the **finally** clause is also executed just before the method returns. This can be useful for closing file handles and freeing up any other resources that might have been allocated at the beginning of a method with the intent of disposing of them before returning. The **finally** clause is optional. However, each **try** statement requires at least one **catch** or a **finally** clause.

Here is an example program that shows three methods that exit in various ways, none without executing their **finally** clauses:

```
// Demonstrate finally.
class FinallyDemo {
    // Through an exception out of the method.
    static void procA() {
        try {
            System.out.println("inside procA");
            throw new RuntimeException("demo");
        } finally {
            System.out.println("procA's finally");
        }
    }

    // Return from within a try block.
    static void procB() {
        try {
            System.out.println("inside procB");
            return;
        } finally {
            System.out.println("procB's finally");
        }
    }

    // Execute a try block normally.
    static void procC() {
        try {
            System.out.println("inside procC");
        } finally {
```

```

        System.out.println("procC's finally");
    }
}

public static void main(String args[]) {
    try {
        procA();
    } catch (Exception e) {
        System.out.println("Exception caught");
    }
    procB();
    procC();
}
}

```

In this example, `procA()` prematurely breaks out of the `try` by throwing an exception. The `finally` clause is executed on the way out. `procB()`'s `try` statement is exited via a `return` statement. The `finally` clause is executed before `procB()` returns. In `procC()`, the `try` statement executes normally, without error. However, the `finally` block is still executed.

REMEMBER *If a `finally` block is associated with a `try`, the `finally` block will be executed upon conclusion of the `try`.*

Here is the output generated by the preceding program:

```

inside procA
procA's finally
Exception caught
inside procB
procB's finally
inside procC
procC's finally

```

Java's Built-in Exceptions

Inside the standard package `java.lang`, Java defines several exception classes. A few have been used by the preceding examples. The most general of these exceptions are subclasses of the standard type `RuntimeException`. As previously explained, these exceptions need not be included in any method's `throws` list. In the language of Java, these are called *unchecked exceptions* because the compiler does not check to see if a method handles or throws these exceptions. The unchecked exceptions defined in `java.lang` are listed in Table 10-1. Table 10-2 lists those exceptions defined by `java.lang` that must be included in a method's `throws` list if that method can generate one of these exceptions and does not handle it itself. These are called *checked exceptions*. Java defines several other types of exceptions that relate to its various class libraries.

Exception	Meaning
ArithmeticException	Arithmetic error, such as divide-by-zero.
ArrayIndexOutOfBoundsException	Array index is out-of-bounds.
ArrayStoreException	Assignment to an array element of an incompatible type.
ClassCastException	Invalid cast.
EnumConstantNotPresentException	An attempt is made to use an undefined enumeration value.
IllegalArgumentException	Illegal argument used to invoke a method.
IllegalMonitorStateException	Illegal monitor operation, such as waiting on an unlocked thread.
IllegalStateException	Environment or application is in incorrect state.
IllegalThreadStateException	Requested operation not compatible with current thread state.
IndexOutOfBoundsException	Some type of index is out-of-bounds.
NegativeArraySizeException	Array created with a negative size.
NullPointerException	Invalid use of a null reference.
NumberFormatException	Invalid conversion of a string to a numeric format.
SecurityException	Attempt to violate security.
StringIndexOutOfBoundsException	Attempt to index outside the bounds of a string.
TypeNotPresentException	Type not found.
UnsupportedOperationException	An unsupported operation was encountered.

TABLE 10-1 Java's Unchecked **RuntimeException** Subclasses Defined in **java.lang**

Exception	Meaning
ClassNotFoundException	Class not found.
CloneNotSupportedException	Attempt to clone an object that does not implement the Cloneable interface.
IllegalAccessException	Access to a class is denied.
InstantiationException	Attempt to create an object of an abstract class or interface.
InterruptedException	One thread has been interrupted by another thread.
NoSuchFieldException	A requested field does not exist.
NoSuchMethodException	A requested method does not exist.

TABLE 10-2 Java's Checked Exceptions Defined in **java.lang**

Creating Your Own Exception Subclasses

Although Java's built-in exceptions handle most common errors, you will probably want to create your own exception types to handle situations specific to your applications. This is quite easy to do: just define a subclass of **Exception** (which is, of course, a subclass of **Throwable**). Your subclasses don't need to actually implement anything—it is their existence in the type system that allows you to use them as exceptions.

The **Exception** class does not define any methods of its own. It does, of course, inherit those methods provided by **Throwable**. Thus, all exceptions, including those that you create, have the methods defined by **Throwable** available to them. They are shown in Table 10-3.

Method	Description
<code>Throwable fillInStackTrace()</code>	Returns a Throwable object that contains a completed stack trace. This object can be rethrown.
<code>Throwable getCause()</code>	Returns the exception that underlies the current exception. If there is no underlying exception, null is returned.
<code>String getLocalizedMessage()</code>	Returns a localized description of the exception.
<code>String getMessage()</code>	Returns a description of the exception.
<code>StackTraceElement[] getStackTrace()</code>	Returns an array that contains the stack trace, one element at a time, as an array of StackTraceElement . The method at the top of the stack is the last method called before the exception was thrown. This method is found in the first element of the array. The StackTraceElement class gives your program access to information about each element in the trace, such as its method name.
<code>Throwable initCause(Throwable <i>causeExc</i>)</code>	Associates <i>causeExc</i> with the invoking exception as a cause of the invoking exception. Returns a reference to the exception.
<code>void printStackTrace()</code>	Displays the stack trace.
<code>void printStackTrace(PrintStream <i>stream</i>)</code>	Sends the stack trace to the specified stream.
<code>void printStackTrace(PrintWriter <i>stream</i>)</code>	Sends the stack trace to the specified stream.
<code>void setStackTrace(StackTraceElement <i>elements</i>[])</code>	Sets the stack trace to the elements passed in <i>elements</i> . This method is for specialized applications, not normal use.
<code>String toString()</code>	Returns a String object containing a description of the exception. This method is called by println() when outputting a Throwable object.

TABLE 10-3 The Methods Defined by **Throwable**

You may also wish to override one or more of these methods in exception classes that you create.

Exception defines four constructors. Two were added by JDK 1.4 to support chained exceptions, described in the next section. The other two are shown here:

```
Exception()
Exception(String msg)
```

The first form creates an exception that has no description. The second form lets you specify a description of the exception.

Although specifying a description when an exception is created is often useful, sometimes it is better to override **toString()**. Here's why: The version of **toString()** defined by **Throwable** (and inherited by **Exception**) first displays the name of the exception followed by a colon, which is then followed by your description. By overriding **toString()**, you can prevent the exception name and colon from being displayed. This makes for a cleaner output, which is desirable in some cases.

The following example declares a new subclass of **Exception** and then uses that subclass to signal an error condition in a method. It overrides the **toString()** method, allowing a carefully tailored description of the exception to be displayed.

```
// This program creates a custom exception type.
class MyException extends Exception {
    private int detail;

    MyException(int a) {
        detail = a;
    }

    public String toString() {
        return "MyException[" + detail + "]";
    }
}

class ExceptionDemo {
    static void compute(int a) throws MyException {
        System.out.println("Called compute(" + a + ")");
        if(a > 10)
            throw new MyException(a);
        System.out.println("Normal exit");
    }

    public static void main(String args[]) {
        try {
            compute(1);
            compute(20);
        } catch (MyException e) {
            System.out.println("Caught " + e);
        }
    }
}
```

This example defines a subclass of **Exception** called **MyException**. This subclass is quite simple: it has only a constructor plus an overloaded **toString()** method that displays the

value of the exception. The `ExceptionDemo` class defines a method named `compute()` that throws a `MyException` object. The exception is thrown when `compute()`'s integer parameter is greater than 10. The `main()` method sets up an exception handler for `MyException`, then calls `compute()` with a legal value (less than 10) and an illegal one to show both paths through the code. Here is the result:

```
Called compute(1)
Normal exit
Called compute(20)
Caught MyException[20]
```

Chained Exceptions

Beginning with JDK 1.4, a new feature has been incorporated into the exception subsystem: *chained exceptions*. The chained exception feature allows you to associate another exception with an exception. This second exception describes the cause of the first exception. For example, imagine a situation in which a method throws an `ArithmeticException` because of an attempt to divide by zero. However, the actual cause of the problem was that an I/O error occurred, which caused the divisor to be set improperly. Although the method must certainly throw an `ArithmeticException`, since that is the error that occurred, you might also want to let the calling code know that the underlying cause was an I/O error. Chained exceptions let you handle this, and any other situation in which layers of exceptions exist.

To allow chained exceptions, two constructors and two methods were added to `Throwable`. The constructors are shown here:

```
Throwable(Throwable causeExc)
Throwable(String msg, Throwable causeExc)
```

In the first form, `causeExc` is the exception that causes the current exception. That is, `causeExc` is the underlying reason that an exception occurred. The second form allows you to specify a description at the same time that you specify a cause exception. These two constructors have also been added to the `Error`, `Exception`, and `RuntimeException` classes.

The chained exception methods added to `Throwable` are `getCause()` and `initCause()`. These methods are shown in Table 10-3 and are repeated here for the sake of discussion.

```
Throwable getCause()
Throwable initCause(Throwable causeExc)
```

The `getCause()` method returns the exception that underlies the current exception. If there is no underlying exception, `null` is returned. The `initCause()` method associates `causeExc` with the invoking exception and returns a reference to the exception. Thus, you can associate a cause with an exception after the exception has been created. However, the cause exception can be set only once. Thus, you can call `initCause()` only once for each exception object. Furthermore, if the cause exception was set by a constructor, then you can't set it again using `initCause()`. In general, `initCause()` is used to set a cause for legacy exception classes that don't support the two additional constructors described earlier.

Here is an example that illustrates the mechanics of handling chained exceptions:

```
// Demonstrate exception chaining.
class ChainExcDemo {
    static void demoproc() {
```

```

// create an exception
NullPointerException e =
    new NullPointerException("top layer");

// add a cause
e.initCause(new ArithmeticException("cause"));

throw e;
}

public static void main(String args[]) {
    try {
        demoproc();
    } catch(NullPointerException e) {
        // display top level exception
        System.out.println("Caught: " + e);

        // display cause exception
        System.out.println("Original cause: " +
            e.getCause());
    }
}
}

```

The output from the program is shown here:

```

Caught: java.lang.NullPointerException: top layer
Original cause: java.lang.ArithmeticException: cause

```

In this example, the top-level exception is **NullPointerException**. To it is added a cause exception, **ArithmeticException**. When the exception is thrown out of **demoproc()**, it is caught by **main()**. There, the top-level exception is displayed, followed by the underlying exception, which is obtained by calling **getCause()**.

Chained exceptions can be carried on to whatever depth is necessary. Thus, the cause exception can, itself, have a cause. Be aware that overly long chains of exceptions may indicate poor design.

Chained exceptions are not something that every program will need. However, in cases in which knowledge of an underlying cause is useful, they offer an elegant solution.

Using Exceptions

Exception handling provides a powerful mechanism for controlling complex programs that have many dynamic run-time characteristics. It is important to think of **try**, **throw**, and **catch** as clean ways to handle errors and unusual boundary conditions in your program's logic. Unlike some other languages in which error return codes are used to indicate failure, Java uses exceptions. Thus, when a method can fail, have it throw an exception. This is a cleaner way to handle failure modes.

One last point: Java's exception-handling statements should not be considered a general mechanism for nonlocal branching. If you do so, it will only confuse your code and make it hard to maintain.