

Objects with Methods

Wolfgang Schreiner

Research Institute for Symbolic Computation (RISC)

Johannes Kepler University, Linz, Austria

Wolfgang.Schreiner@risc.jku.at

<http://www.risc.jku.at>

Classes as Modules

A class may be a collection of methods, variables, and constants.

```
public class Class
{
    public static type variable = expression;
    public static final type constant = expression;
    public static type method(parameters)
    { ... }
    ...
}
```

- A method is bound to a class:

Class.method(arguments)

- Method may refer to variables/constants also bound to the class.

Classes as Object Types

A class may be the type of an object.

```
public class Class
{
    public type variable = expression;
    public final type constant = expression;
    public Class(parameters)
    { ... }
    ...
}
```

- Call of constructor bound to an object:

```
new Class(arguments)
```

- Constructor can refer to variables/constants (fields) of the object.

Class Declarations

Difference is the use of the keyword `static`.

- `static` declarations.
 - Declared entity is bound to the `class` in which it is declared.
 - Methods, global constants/variables.
- `non-static` declarations.
 - Declared entity belongs to an `object` of this class.
 - Constructors, object fields.

Any entity may be declared as `static` or as `non-static`.

Object Methods

A method may be bound to an object.

```
public class Class
{
    public type method(parameters)
    {
        ...
    }
    ...
}
```

- Declaration of an **object method**.
 - May refer to the fields of the object to which it is bound.
- Invocation by a qualified name:

object.method(arguments)

Example

```
public class Date
{ public int day;
  public String month;
  public int year;

  public Date(int day, String month, int year)
  { this.day = day;
    this.month = month;
    this.year = year;
  }

  public int getYear() { return year; }
  public void setYear(int year) { this.year = year; }
  public void increaseYear() { year++; }
}
```

Example

```
Date date = new Date(24, "December", 2001);  
System.out.println(date.getYear());
```

2001

```
date.setYear(date.getYear()+1);  
System.out.println(date.getYear());
```

2002

```
date.increaseYear();  
System.out.println(date.getYear());
```

2003

Object Fields versus Object Methods

Why not refer to the object fields directly?

- Two possibilities:
 - `date.year = date.year+1;`
 - `date.increaseYear();`
- By use of methods, object type becomes an **abstract datatype**.
 - Public interface: object methods.
 - Private implementation: object fields.
 - Implementation can be changed at any time without affecting the interface.
 - Object can be used without knowing the implementation.

Only refer to object fields from methods within the object.

Analyzing Exam Grades: Abstracting Data

```
public class Result
{
    public int count = 0;           // number of grades
    public int sum = 0;            // sum of grades processed
    public int min = Integer.MAX_VALUE; // minimum grade processed
    public int max = Integer.MIN_VALUE; // maximum grade processed

    public int getCount() { return count; }
    public void process(int grade)
    { count++;
      sum += grade;
      if (grade < min) min = grade;
      if (grade > max) max = grade;
    }
    void print() { ... }
}
```

Analyzing Exam Grades: Abstracting Data

```
public void print()
{
    System.out.println("\nNumber of grades: " + count);

    // these values are only valid, if there was at least one grade
    if (count > 0)
    {
        System.out.println("Best grade: " + min);
        System.out.println("Worst grade: " + max);
        System.out.println("Average grade: " +
            (float)sum/(float)count);
    }

    System.out.println("");
}
```

Analyzing Exam Grades: General Structure

```
public static void analyzeExamGrades()
{
    char answer = 0;
    do
    {
        Result result = analyzeExam();
        result.print();
        answer = askToContinue();
    }
    while (answer == 'y');
}
```

How a result is printed is hidden within `Result`.

Analyzing Exam Grades: Analyzing an Exam

```
public static Result analyzeExam()
{
    Result result = new Result();

    // read and process exam
    while (true)
    {
        int grade = readGrade(result.getCount());
        if (grade == 0) return result;
        result.process(grade);
    }
}
```

How a result is processed is hidden within Result.

General Class Structure

```
public class Class
{
    public static type variable = expression;           // class fields
    public static final type constant = expression;

    public static type method(parameters) { ... }       // class methods

    public type variable = expression;                 // object fields
    public final type constant = expression;

    public Class(parameters) { ... }                   // constructors

    public type method(parameters) { ... }             // object methods
}
```

The `this` Pointer

Which entity can refer to (read/write/call) which other entity?

- Special Java constant:

`this`

- `this` refers to the “current object”.
 - Can be used in object field declarations, constructors, and object methods.

Answer is based on the `this` pointer.

Static versus Non-static Entities

Short explanation (for details, see the lecture notes).

1. Object fields/methods can be only used by object qualification.
 - `object.method()`
2. For unqualified access, we need the `this` pointer.
 - Automatic translation: `method()` → `this.method()`.
3. Object field declarations and object methods receive `this`.
 - They can therefore refer to object fields and call object methods in the “current” object.
4. Class field declarations and class methods do not receive `this`.
 - There is no “current” object to which they can refer.

Entities declared as `static` cannot use `this`.

Non-static Entities

Where does the `this` pointer come from?

- **Constructors: from the JVM.**
 - When an object has been allocated, its pointer is passed to the constructor as `this`.
- **Object field declarations: from the default constructor.**
 - All initializations are performed by the default constructor.
 - The default constructor receives the `this` pointer from the JVM.
- **Object methods: from the caller.**
 - Object call `object.method()` → `this = object`.
 - The implicit parameter `this` in `method` is set to `object`.
 - When calling another method of the same object, the pointer is implicitly forwarded.
`method()` → `this.method()`.

Example: Object Fields

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int zero = 0;
    public int one = zero+1;
}
```

→

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int zero = 0;
    public int one = this.zero+1;
}
```

Legal declaration.

Example: Class Fields

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int zero = 0;
    public static int one = zero+1;
}
```

Numbers.java:4: non-static variable zero cannot be referenced
from a static context

```
    static int one = zero+1;
                   ^
```

one does not have this.

Example: Class Fields

```
public class Numbers
{
    public static int zero = 0;
    public int one = zero+1;
}
```

→

```
public class Numbers
{
    public static int zero = 0;
    public int one = Numbers.zero+1;
}
```

Legal declaration.

Example: Object Methods

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int one = 1;
    public int add1(int n) { return n+one; }
}
```

→

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int one = 1;
    public int add1(int n) { return n+this.one; }
}
```

Legal declaration.

Example: Object Methods

```
public class Numbers
{ public int mult(int n, int m)
  {
    return n*m;
  }
  public int square(int n)
  {
    return mult(n, n);
  }
}
```

→

```
public int square(int n) { return this.mult(n, n); }
```

Legal declaration.

Example: Class Methods

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int one = 1;
    public static int add1(int n)
    {
        return n+one;
    }
}
```

```
Numbers.java:6: non-static variable one cannot be referenced
                from a static context
    return n+one;
               ^
```

add1 does not have this.

Example: Class Fields

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int one = add(0, 1);
    public static int add(int n, int m) { return n+m; }
}
```

→

```
public class Numbers
{
    public int one = Numbers.add(0, 1);
    public static int add(int n, int m) { return n+m; }
}
```

Legal declaration.