Introduction to Object-Oriented Programming Object-Oriented Programming, Part 2 of 3

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Fitting Classes Into the Java Hierarchy

<code>java.lang.Object</code> defines several methods that are designed to be overriden in subclasses (JLS §4.3.2:)

- The method equals (Object) defines a notion of object equality, which is based on value, not reference, comparison.
- The method hashCode is very used together with equals (Object) in hashtables such as java.util.Hashmap.
- The method toString returns a String representation of the object.
- The method clone is used to make a duplicate of an object (don't touch).
- The method finalize is run just before an object is destroyed (don't touch).

A class hierarchy is also sometimes called a *framework*.

The default implementation of equals (Object) in java.lang.Object is object identity - each object equals (Object) only itself.

When should a class override equals (Object)?

- When logical equality differs from object identity, as is the case for value classes like Date
- When classes don't implement instance control.
 - Instance control means that a class ensures that there is only one instance of a class.
- When a suitable equals (Object) method is not provided by a superclass.

More important than recognizing *when* to override equals (Object) is knowing *how* to override equals (Object).

Obey the general contract of equals (Object) (JLS), which says that equals (Object) defines an equivalence relation. So, for non-null references, equals (Object) is

- reflexive any object equals (Object) itself
- symmetric if a.equals(Object)(b) is true then b.equals(a) must be true
- transitive if a.equals(b) and b.equals(c) are true then a.equals(c) must be true
- consistent if a and b do not change between invocations of a.equals(b) or b.equals(a) then each invocation must return the same result
- a.equals(null) must always return false.

A Recipe for Implementing equals (Object)

Obeying the general contract of equals(Object) is easier if you follow these steps.

- 1 Ensure the other object is not null.
- 2 Check for reference equality with == (are we comparing to self?).
- **3** Check that the other object is an instanceof this object's class.
- Cast the other object to this's type (guaranteed to work after instanceof test)
- **5** Check that each "significant" field in the other object equals (Object) the corresponding field in this object.

After seeing an example application of this recipe we'll motivate the proper implementation of equals (Object) methods by introducing our first collection class, ArrayList.

An Example equals (Object) Method

Assume we have a Person class with a single name field.

- Ensure the other object is not null.
- 2 Check for reference equality with == (are we comparing to self?).
- **3** Check that the other object is an instanceof this object's class.
- Cast the other object to this's type (guaranteed to work after instanceof test)
- **5** Check that each "significant" field in the other object equals (Object) the corresponding field in this object.

Applying the recipe:

- Arrays are fixed-size collections of any data types, including primitives
- ArrayLists are dynamically-allocated (i.e., automatically resized) collections of reference types (not primitives - but we'll talk about autoboxing).
- ArrayLists use arrays internally, but this isn't important to know for basic use.

Create an ArrayList with operator new:

```
ArrayList tasks = new ArrayList();
```

Add items with add():

```
tasks.add("Eat");
tasks.add("Sleep");
tasks.add("Code");
```

Traverse with for-each loop:

```
for (Object task: tasks) {
    System.out.println(task);
}
```

Note that the for-each loop implicitly uses an iterator.

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Primitives in Collections

ArrayLists can only hold reference types. So you must use wrapper classes for primitives:

```
ArrayList ints = new ArrayList();
ints.add(new Integer(42));
```

Java auto-boxes primitives when adding to a collection:

ints.add(99);

But auto-unboxing can't be done when retrieving from an untyped collection:

```
int num = ints.get(0); // won't compile
```

The old way to handle this with untyped collections is to cast it:

int num = (Integer) ints.get(0); // auto-unboxing on assignment to int

We'll see a better way to handle this with generics.

 See ArrayListPrimitivesDemo.java for more.
 Image: Comparison of the second second

The equals (Object) Method and Collections

- A class whose instances will be stored in a collection must have a properly implemented equals (Object) method.
- The contains method in collections uses the equals (Object) method in the stored objects.
- The default implementation of equals (Object) (object identity true only for same object in memory) only rarely gives correct results.
- Note that hashcode() also has a defualt implementation that uses the object's memory address. As a rule, whenever you override equals(Object), you should also override hashcode¹.

¹hashcode() is used in objects that are keys in Maps. You'll learn about Maps later in the course.

equals (Object) Method Examples

In this simple class hierarchy, FoundPerson has a properly implemented equals (Object) method and LostPerson does not.

```
abstract static class Person H
    public String name;
    public Person(String name) {
        this.name = name;
static class LostPerson extends Person
    public LostPerson(String name) { super(name); }
static class FoundPerson extends Person {
    public FoundPerson(String name) { super(name); }
    public boolean equals(Object other) {
        if (this == other) { return true; }
        if (!(other instanceof Person)) { return false; }
        return ((Person) other).name.equals(this.name);
```

Let's examine the code in ArrayListEqualsDemo.java.

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Two methods are override-equivalent if:

- they have the same name,
- they have the same parameter lists, and
- their return values are <u>covariant</u>

These rules lead to a few pitfalls:

- You can't define override-equivalent methods in the same class.
- In subclasses it's easy to accidentally overload a superclass method when you meant to override.

Let's look at a few examples to help us understand these rules.

Covariant Returns

covariantReturn is covariant in Person and LostPerson:

```
abstract static class Person {
   public String name;
   public Person(String name) { this.name = name; }
   public Object covariantReturn() { return new Object(); }
}
static class LostPerson extends Person {
   public LostPerson(String name) { super(name); }
   @Override public LostPerson covariantReturn() { return this; }
}
```

... because LostPerson is a subtype of Object. But SubLostPerson won't compile:

```
static class SubLostPerson extends LostPerson {
   public SubLostPerson(String name) { super(name); }
   @Override public Person covariantReturn() { return this; }
}
```

... becuase its covariantReturn's return type is *contravariant*, that is, Person is a supertype of LostPerson.

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NoncompilingPerson won't compile because int is not a subtype of boolean and because return-type covariance only applies to reference types, not primitives.

```
static class NonCompilingPerson extends Person {
    public NonCompilingPerson(String name) { super(name); }
    /**
    * This method won't compile because int is not a subtype of
boolean.
     */
    public int equals(Object other) {
        if (null == other) return 0;
        if (this == other) return 1:
        if (!(other instanceof Person)) return 0;
        return ((Person) other).name.equals(this.name) ? 1 : 0;
```

Accidental Overloading

It's easy to make this mistake:

```
static class OverloadedPerson extends Person {
   public OverloadedPerson(String name) { super(name); }

   public boolean equals(OverloadedPerson other) {
      if (null == other) { return false; }
      if (this == other) { return true; }
      if (!(other instanceof OverloadedPerson)) { return false; }
      return ((OverloadedPerson) other).name.equals(this.name);
   }
}
```

- Signature of equals in Object is public boolean equals (Object other) - parameter type is Object.
- In OverloadedPerson we've accidentally overloaded equals instead of overriding equals by making the parameter type OverloadedPerson.

Using the Override annotation helps you avoid this mistake.

- java.lang.Object is the root superclass of every Java class.
- "Classic" Java collections are general because they hold elements of type Object
- Java collections and many programming idioms rely on the methods defined in Object, some of which must be overridden in subclasses in order for instances of these subclasses to function properly as elements of collections.
- Overriding equals is straightforward if you follow the recipe.
- There's more to overriding equals in particular, overriding hashcode but now we know the basic concepts.