
Chapter 11

Text Formatting Classes

What is in This Chapter ?

This chapter discusses formatting of text output and the various classes involved such as **String**, **Date**, **GregorianCalendar** and others. This chapter can be viewed as an explanation of the tool-like classes available in JAVA to make your life easier.



11.1 Formatting Text

Consider the following program which asks the user for the price of a product, then displays the cost with taxes included, then asks for the payment amount and finally prints out the change that would be returned:

```
import java.util.Scanner;

public class ChangeCalculatorProgram {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        // Declare the variables that we will be using
        double price, total, payment, change;

        // Get the price from the user
        System.out.println("Enter product price:");
        price = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Compute and display the total with 13% tax
        total = price * 1.13;
        System.out.println("Total cost:$" + total);

        // Ask for the payment amount
        System.out.println("Enter payment amount:");
        payment = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Compute and display the resulting change
        change = payment - total;
        System.out.println("Change:$" + change);
    }
}
```

Here is the output from running this program with a price of **35.99** and payment of **50**:

```
Enter product price:
35.99
Total cost:$40.66870172505378
Enter payment amount:
50
Change:$9.33129827494622
```

Notice all of the decimal places. This is not pretty. Even worse ...if you were to run the program and enter a price of **8.85** and payment of **10**, the output would be as follows:

```
Enter product price:
8.85
Total cost:$10.0005003888607
Enter payment amount:
10
Change:$-5.003888607006957E-4
```

The **E-4** indicates that the decimal place should be moved 4 units to the left...so the resulting change is actually -\$0.0005003888607006957. While the above answers are correct, it would be nice to display the numbers properly as numbers with 2 decimal places.

JAVA's **String** class has a nice function called **format()** which will allow us to format a String in almost any way that we want to. Consider (from our code above) replacing the change output line to:

```
System.out.println("Change:$" + String.format("%,1.2f", change));
```

The **String.format()** always returns a **String** object with a format that we get to specify. In our example, this **String** will represent the formatted **change** which is then printed out. Notice that the function allows us to *pass-in* two parameters (i.e., two pieces of information separated by a comma **,** character). Recall that we discussed parameters when we created constructors and methods for our own objects.

The first parameter is itself a **String** object that specifies how we want to format the resulting String. The second parameter is the value that we want to format (usually a variable name). Pay careful attention to the brackets. Clearly, **change** is the variable we want to format. Notice the format string **"%,1.2f"**. These characters have special meaning to JAVA. The **%** character indicates that there will be a parameter after the format String (i.e., the **change** variable). The **1.2f** indicates to JAVA that we want it to display the **change** as a floating point number with at least **1** digit before the decimal and exactly **2** digits after the decimal. The **,** character indicates that we would like it to automatically display commas in the money amount when necessary (e.g., \$1,500,320.28). Apply this formatting to the total amount as well:

```
import java.util.Scanner;

public class ChangeCalculatorProgram2 {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        // Declare the variables that we will be using
        double price, total, payment, change;

        // Get the price from the user
        System.out.println("Enter product price:");
        price = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Compute and display the total with 13% tax
        total = price * 1.13;
        System.out.println("Total cost:$" + String.format("%,1.2f", total));

        // Ask for the payment amount
        System.out.println("Enter payment amount:");
        payment = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Compute and display the resulting change
        change = payment - total;
        System.out.println("Change:$" + String.format("%,1.2f", change));
    }
}
```

Here is the resulting output for both test cases:

```
Enter product price:
35.99
Total cost:$40.67
Enter payment amount:
50
Change:$9.33
```

```
Enter product price:
8.85
Total cost:$10.00
Enter payment amount:
10
Change:$-0.00
```

It is a bit weird to see a value of **-0.00**, but that is a result of the calculation. Can you think of a way to adjust the **change** calculation of **payment - total** so that it eliminates the **-** sign ? Try it.

The **String.format()** can also be used to align text as well. For example, suppose that we wanted our program to display a receipt instead of just the change. How could we display a receipt in this format:

```
Product Price      35.99
                Tax      4.68
-----
Subtotal          40.67
Amount Tendered   50.00
=====
Change Due        9.33
```

If you notice, the largest line of text is the **"Amount Tendered"** line which requires 15 characters. After that, the remaining spaces and money value take up 10 characters. We can therefore see that each line of the receipt takes up 25 characters. We can then use the following format string to print out a line of text:

```
System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", aString, aFloat));
```

Here, the **%15s** indicates that we want to display a string which we want to take up exactly **15** characters. The **%10.2f** then indicates that we want to display a float value with **2** decimal places that takes up exactly 10 characters in total (including the decimal character). Notice that we then pass in two parameters: which must be a **String** and a **float** value in that order (these would likely be some variables from our program). We can then adjust our program to use this new String format as follows ...

```

import java.util.Scanner;

public class ChangeCalculatorProgram3 {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        // Declare the variables that we will be using
        double price, tax, total, payment, change;

        // Get the price from the user
        System.out.println("Enter product price:");
        price = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Ask for the payment amount
        System.out.println("Enter payment amount:");
        payment = new Scanner(System.in).nextFloat();

        // Compute the total with 13% tax as well as the change due
        tax = price * 0.13;
        total = price + tax;
        change = payment - total;

        // Display the whole receipt
        System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", "Product Price", price));
        System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", "Tax", tax));
        System.out.println("-----");
        System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", "Subtotal", total));
        System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", "Amount Tendered", payment));
        System.out.println("=====");
        System.out.println(String.format("%15s%10.2f", "Change Due", change));
    }
}

```

The result is the correct formatting that we wanted. Realize though that in the above code, we could have also left out the formatting for the 15 character strings by manually entering the necessary spaces:

```

System.out.println(String.format("  Product Price%10.2f", price));
System.out.println(String.format("          Tax%10.2f", tax));
System.out.println("          -----");
System.out.println(String.format("          Subtotal%10.2f", total));
System.out.println(String.format("Amount Tendered%10.2f", payment));
System.out.println("          =====");
System.out.println(String.format("          Change Due%10.2f", change));

```

However, the **String.format** function provides much more flexibility. For example, if we used **%-15S** instead of **%15s**, we would get a left justified result (due to the **-**) and capitalized letters (due to the capital **S**) as follows:

```

PRODUCT PRICE          34.99
TAX                    4.55
-----
SUBTOTAL              39.54
AMOUNT TENDERED      50.00
=====
CHANGE DUE            10.46

```

There are many more format options that you can experiment with. Just make sure that you supply the required number of parameters. That is, you need as many parameters as you have **%** signs in your format string.

For example, the following code will produce a **MissingFormatArgumentException** since one of the arguments (i.e., values) is missing (i.e., 4 % signs in the format string, but only 3 supplied values:

```
System.out.println(String.format("$%.2f + $%.2f + $%.2f = $%.2f", x, y, z));
```



Also, you should be careful not to miss-match types, otherwise an error may occur (i.e., **IllegalFormatConversionException**).

Supplemental Information (Other String.format Flags)

There are a few other format types that may be used in the format string:

Type	Description of What it Displays	Example Output
%d	a general integer	4096
%x	an integer in lowercase hexadecimal	ff
%X	an integer in uppercase hexadecimal	FF
%o	an integer in octal	377
%f	a floating point number with a fixed number of spaces	83.43
%e	an exponential floating point number	7.869877e-03
%g	a general floating point number with a fixed number of significant digits	0.008
%s	a string as given	"Hello"
%S	a string in uppercase	"HELLO"
%n	a platform-independent line end	<CR><LF>
%b	a boolean in lowercase	true
%B	a boolean in uppercase	FALSE

There are also various format flags that can be added after the **%** sign:

Format Flag	Description of What It Does	Example Output
-	numbers are to be left justified	2378.348 followed by any necessary spaces
0	leading zeros should be shown	000244.87
+	plus sign should be shown if positive number	+67.34
(enclose number in round brackets if negative	(439.67)
,	show decimal group separators	2,347,892.99

There are many options for specifying various formats including the formatting of Dates and Times, but they will not be discussed any further here. Please look at the java documentation.

11.2 The String Class

Strings are one of the most commonly used concepts in all programming languages. They are used to represent text characters and are fundamental in allowing a user to interact with the program. In JAVA, Strings are actually objects, not primitives and any text between double quotes represents a *literal* String in our programs:

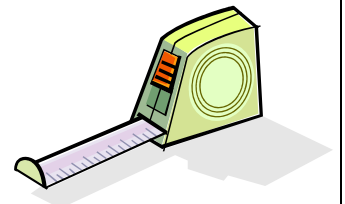
```
String name = "Stan Dupp";
String empty = "";
```

However, since Strings are also objects, we can create one by using one of many available constructors. Here are two examples:

```
String nothing = new String();           // makes an empty String
String copy = new String(name);          // makes copy of the name String
```

A **String** has a *length* corresponding to the number of characters in the String. We can ask a **String** for its length by using the **length()** method:

```
String name = "Stan Dupp";
String empty = "";
name.length();           // returns 9
empty.length();          // returns 0
```



This length remains unchanged for the string at all times. That is, once a string has been created we *cannot change the size* of the string, nor can we *append* to the string.

Even though we cannot append to a String, we can still make use of the **+** operator to join two of them together. Recall, for example, the use of the **+** operator within the **toString()** method for the **Person** class:

```
public String toString() {
    return (this.age + " year old Person named " +
            this.firstName + " " + this.lastName);
}
```

Here, we are actually combining 5 **String** objects to form a new **String** object containing the result ... the original 5 String objects remain unaltered.

Each character in a **String** is assigned an imaginary integer index that represents its order in the sequence. The first character in the **String** has an index of 0, the second character has

an index of 1, and so on. We can access any character from a **String** by using the **charAt()** method which requires us to specify the index of the character that we want to get:

```
String name = "Hank Urchif";
name.charAt(0);           // returns character 'H'
name.charAt(1);           // returns character 'a'
name.charAt(name.length() - 1); // returns character 'f'
name.charAt(name.length()); // causes StringIndexOutOfBoundsException
name.charAt(100);         // causes StringIndexOutOfBoundsException
```



There are also some methods in the **String** class that allow us to extract a sequence (or range) of characters from the String. The **substring(s,e)** method does just that. It takes two parameters **s** and **e**, where **s** specifies the starting character index and **e** specifies one more than the ending character index:

```
String name = "Hank Urchif";
name.substring(0, 4);           // returns character "Hank"
name.substring(5, 11);          // returns character "Urchif"
name.substring(1, name.length()); // returns character "ank Urchif"
name.substring(3, 6);           // returns character "k U"
```

In all cases above, the resulting **String** is a new object, the original **name** object remaining unchanged.



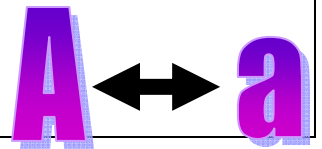
There is also a very useful method for eliminating unwanted leading and trailing characters (e.g., spaces, tabs, newlines and carriage returns). This can be useful when writing programs that get String input (e.g., name, address, email etc..) from the user through text fields on windows. The **trim()** method returns a new **String** object that represents the original string object but with no leading and trailing space, tab, newline or carriage return characters.

```
String s1 = "    I need a shave    ";
String s2 = "                ";
s1.trim(); // returns "I need a shave"
s2.trim(); // returns empty string ""
```



Also, sometimes when getting input from the user we would like to force the information to be formatted as either uppercase or lowercase characters. Two useful methods called **toUpperCase()** and **toLowerCase()** will generate a copy of the string but with all alphabetic characters converted to uppercase or lowercase, respectively. The methods only affect the alphabetic characters ... all other characters remain the same.


```
String s = "Tea For 2!";
s.toUpperCase() ; // returns "TEA FOR 2!"
s.toLowerCase() ; // returns "tea for 2!"
```



A final important topic that we will discuss regarding strings is that of comparing strings with one another. String comparison is a fundamental tool used in many programs. For example, whenever we want to search for a person's name in a list, we must compare the name of the person (i.e., a **String**) with all of the names in a list of some sort.

JAVA has two useful methods for comparing Strings. The **equals(s)** method compares one **String** with another **String**, **s**, and then returns **true** if the two strings have the exact same characters in them and **false** otherwise. A similar comparison method called **equalsIgnoreCase(s)** is used to compare the two strings but in a way such that lowercase and uppercase characters are considered equal.

```
String apple1 = "apple";
String apple2 = "APPLE";
String apple3 = "apples";
String orange = "orange";

apple1.equals(orange);           // returns false
apple1.equals(apple2);          // returns false
apple1.equals(apple3);          // returns false
apple1.equals(apple2.toLowerCase()); // returns true

apple1.equalsIgnoreCase(apple2); // returns true
```



In regards to sorting strings, the **compareTo(s)** method will compare one string with another (i.e., parameter **s**) and return information about their respective alphabetical ordering. The method returns an integer which is:

- negative if the first string is *alphabetically before* **s**
- positive if the first string is *alphabetically after* **s**, or
- zero if the first string equals **s**

```
String apple = "Apple";
String orange = "Orange";
String banana = "Banana";

banana.compareTo(orange); // returns -13, Banana comes before Orange
banana.compareTo(apple);  // returns 1, Banana comes after Apple
apple.compareTo("Apple"); // returns 0, Apple equals Apple
"Zebra".compareTo("apple"); // returns -7, uppercase chars are before lower!
"apple".compareTo("Apple"); // returns 32, lowercase chars are after upper!
```



You may notice, in the last two cases, that uppercase characters always come alphabetically before lowercase characters. You should always take this into account when sorting data. To avoid sorting problems, it may be best to use `toUpperCase()` on each **String** before comparing them:

```
if (s1.toUpperCase().compareTo(s2.toUpperCase()) < 0)
    // s1 comes first
else
    // s2 comes first
```

Another very useful method in the **String** class is the `split()` method because it allows you to break up a **String** into individual substrings (called *tokens*) based on some separation criteria. For example, we can extract

- words from a sentence, one by one
- fields from a database or text file, separated by commas or other chars

The term **delimiter** is used to indicate the character(s) that separate the tokens (i.e., individual words or data elements).

Consider for example, the following String data which has been read in from a file:

```
"Mark,Lanthier,43,M,false"
```

Perhaps this is data for a particular person and we want to extract the information from the string in a way that we can use it. If we consider the comma ',' character as the only delimiter, then we can use the `split` method to obtain an array of Strings which we can then parse one by one to extract the needed data:

```
String s1 = "Mark,Lanthier,43,M,false";

String[] tokens = s1.split(",");
for(String token: tokens)
    System.out.println(token);
```



The code above will produce the following output:

```
Mark
Lanthier
41
M
false
```

Each token is an individual String that can be used afterwards. If, for example, we wanted to have just the 3rd piece of data (i.e., 41) and use it in a math expression, we could split the string and access just that piece of data, converting it to an integer as necessary ...

```
String    s1 = "Mark,Lanthier,43,M,false";
String[]  tokens;
int       age;

tokens = s1.split(",");
age = Integer.parseInt(tokens[2]);
if (age > 21) ...
```

The `","` parameter to the **split()** method above indicates that the `,` character is the delimiter. If we had the following String, however, we may want to include the `:` character as a delimiter as well:

```
"Mark,Lanthier:43:M,false"
```

We cannot simply use the parameter string `","` because that will only consider consecutive comma colon characters as delimiters (i.e., a 2-char delimiter). We want to allow the comma OR the colon to be delimiters, but not necessarily together. To accomplish this, the expression in the string becomes more complex. We basically have to indicate that we want all non-alphanumeric characters to be part of the tokens and everything else to be delimiters. So the following code would do what we want:

```
String    s1 = "Mark,Lanthier:43:'M',false";

String[] tokens = s1.split("[^a-zA-Z0-9]");
for(String token: tokens)
    System.out.println(token);
```

Notice the square brackets `[]` in the parameter string. This indicates that we are about to list a sequence of characters to be the delimiters. The `^` character negates the list of characters to indicate that we are about to list all the non-delimiter characters (i.e., the token characters). Then we list the alphanumeric ranges `a-z`, `A-Z` and `0-9` to indicate that any alphanumeric character is part of a token, while everything else is to be considered a delimiter.

The parameter string is considered to be a **regular expression** (not discussed here) and can be quite complex. You may look in JAVA's API for more information. In some cases, the token strings will be of size 0. For example, consider the following code:

```
String    s1 = "Mark,  Lanthier    , 43    ,,, M ,  false";

String[] tokens = s1.split("[, ]");    // comma or space delimiter
for(String token: tokens)
    System.out.println(token);
```

The following output would be obtained ...

```
Mark  
  
Lanthier  
  
  
41  
  
  
  
M  
  
  
  
false
```

Notice that there are many spaces in between. These spaces are empty strings. We should check for the empty strings in our code:

```
String s1 = "Mark, Lanthier , 43 ,,, M , false";  
  
String[] tokens = s1.split("[, ]"); // comma or space delimiter  
for(String token: tokens)  
    if (token.length() > 0)  
        System.out.println(token);
```

Then we obtain the output as before:

```
Mark  
Lanthier  
41  
M  
false
```

Supplemental Information (StringTokenizers)

There is another (perhaps simpler) way of extracting tokens from a **String** through use of the **StringTokenizer** class (imported from the **java.util** package). However, for some reason, the JAVA guys “suggest” that you use the **split()** method instead.

```
String    s = "Mark,    Lanthier    ,    44    ,,,    M    ,    false";

StringTokenizer tokens = new StringTokenizer(s, ", ");
System.out.println("The string has " + tokens.countTokens() + " tokens");

while(tokens.hasMoreTokens()) {
    System.out.println(tokens.nextToken());
}
```

This code will produce the same result as above, but with an extra line of output indicating the number of tokens in total, which is 5 in this example.

Interestingly, the **Scanner** class that we used for getting keyboard input can also be used to get tokens from a **String**. The list of delimiters however is actually a pattern sequence, not a list of separate delimiter characters. That means, whatever is listed as the delimiter string must match exactly (i.e., in the example below, a single comma must be followed by a single space character):

```
String sentence = "Banks, Rob, 34, Ottawa, 12.67";
Scanner s = new Scanner(sentence).useDelimiter(", ");
System.out.println(s.next());
System.out.println(s.next());
System.out.println(s.nextInt());
System.out.println(s.next());
System.out.println(s.nextFloat());
s.close();
```

Notice that the **Scanner** should be closed, we did not do this earlier but it is common practice.

11.3 The StringBuilder & Character Classes

Strings cannot be changed once created. Instead, when we try to manipulate them, we always get back a “brand new” **String** object. This is not normally a problem in most cases when programming, however, sometimes we would like to be able to *modify* a **String** by inserting/removing characters. For example, when we open a file in a text editor or word processor, we usually append, cut and insert text “on the fly”. It would be memory-inefficient and time-inefficient to continually create new strings and copy over characters from an



old string to a new one.

The **StringBuilder** class in JAVA is useful for such a purpose. You may think of it simply as a **String** that can be modified. The **StringBuilder** methods run a little slower than their **String** equivalent methods, so if you plan to create strings that will not need to change, use **String** objects instead.

Here are two constructors for the **StringBuilder** class:

```
new StringBuilder();  
new StringBuilder(s); // s is a String
```

The first creates a **StringBuilder** with no characters to begin with and the second creates one with the characters equal to the ones in the given **String s**.

As with Strings, the **length()** method can be used to return the number of characters in the **StringBuilder** as follows:

```
StringBuilder sb1, sb2;  
  
sb1 = new StringBuilder();  
sb2 = new StringBuilder("hello there");  
sb1.length(); // returns 0  
sb2.length(); // returns 11
```

Unlike **Strings**, you can actually modify the length of the **StringBuilder** to any particular length by using a **setLength(int newLength)** method. If the **newLength** is less than the current length, the characters at the end of the **StringBuilder** are truncated. If the size is greater, **null** characters are used to fill in the extra places at the end as follows:

```
StringBuilder sb;  
  
sb = new StringBuilder("hello there");  
sb.setLength(9);  
System.out.println(sb); // displays "hello the"
```

As with **Strings**, the **charAt(int index)** method is used to access particular characters based on their **index** position (which starts at position 0). Unlike Strings though, a **setCharAt(int index, char c)** method is also available which allows you to change the character at the given **index** to become the specified character **c**.

Here is how these methods work ...

```
StringBuilder    name;

name = new StringBuilder("Chip Electronic");
name.charAt(3);           // returns 'p'
name.setCharAt(4, '+');
System.out.println(name); // displays "Chip+Electronic"
```

However, a more commonly used method in the **StringBuilder** class is the **append(Object x)** method which allows you to append a bunch of characters to the end of the **StringBuilder**. If **x** is a **String** object, the entire string is appended to the end. If **x** is any other object, JAVA will call the **toString()** method for that object and append the resulting **String** to the end of the **StringBuilder**:

```
StringBuilder    sb = new StringBuilder();
sb.append("Mark has ");
sb.append(new BankAccount("Mark"));
System.out.println(sb); // displays "Mark has Account #10000 with $0.0"
```

The resulting output may differ, of course, depending on the **BankAccount**'s **toString()** method. Similar methods also exist for appending an **int**, **long**, **float**, **double**, **boolean** or **char** as follows:

```
append(int x), append(long x), append(float x),
append(double x), append(boolean x), append(char x)
```

The final two methods that we will mention allow you to remove characters from the **StringBuilder**. The **deleteCharAt(int index)** method will remove the character at the given **index** while the **delete(int start, int end)** method will delete all the characters within the indices ranging from **start** to **end-1** as follows:

```
StringBuilder    sb;

sb = new StringBuilder("Miles Perlyter");
sb.delete(3,11);           // changes sb to "Milter"
sb.deleteCharAt(sb.length()-1); // changes sb to "Milte"
sb.deleteCharAt(sb.length()-1); // changes sb to "Milt"
```

Sometimes, it is useful to use a **StringBuilder** to go through a **String** and make changes to it. For example, consider using a **StringBuilder** to remove all the non-alphabetic characters from a **String** as follows (of course the result would have to be a new **String**, since the original cannot be modified) ...


```

String      original, result = "";
StringBuilder sb;
Character    c;

original = "Hello, my 1st name ... is Mark !!";
sb = new StringBuilder();
for (int i=0; i<original.length(); i++) {
    c = original.charAt(i);
    if (Character.isLetter(c))
        sb.append(c);
}
result = new String(sb);
System.out.println(result);

```

Notice a couple of things from this code. First, the **StringBuilder** is used as a temporary object for creating the result string but is no longer useful after the method has completed. We use one of the **String** class' constructors to create the new **String** ... passing in the **StringBuilder**. Second, we are checking for non-alphabetic characters by using **Character.isLetter()**. Here, **isLetter()** is a **static** function in the **Character** class that determines whether or not the given character is alphabetic or not.



Side note: **Character** is a class in JAVA known as a **wrapper class** because it is an **object wrapper** for the **char** primitive. Essentially, the class can be used to “convert” (i.e., wrap up) a **char** into an object that can then be used as a regular object. There is a wrapper class for each of the primitives in JAVA (i.e., **Integer**, **Long**, **Float**, **Double**, **Character**, **Boolean**, **Short** and **Byte**). Since JAVA 1.5, primitives are automatically wrapped into objects, and so we need not worry about this.

There are other useful methods in the **Character** class. Here are just a few:

```

Character.isLetter(c)           // checks if c is a letter in the alphabet
Character.isDigit(c)           // checks if c is a digit (i.e., '0' - '9')
Character.isLetterOrDigit(c)    // ... this one is obvious ...
Character.isWhiteSpace(c)       // checks if c is the space character
Character.isLowerCase(c)        // checks if c is lowercase (e.g., 'a')
Character.isUpperCase(c)        // checks if c is uppercase (e.g., 'A')
Character.toLowerCase(c)        // returns lowercase equivalent of c
Character.toUpperCase(c)        // returns uppercase equivalent of c

```

Here are some examples of how they are used:

```

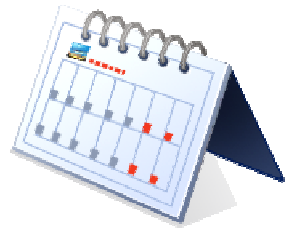
Character.isLetter('A')         // returns true
Character.isDigit('6')          // returns true
Character.isLetterOrDigit('@')  // returns false
Character.isWhiteSpace(' ')     // returns true
Character.isLowerCase('a')      // returns true
Character.isUpperCase('A')      // returns true
Character.toLowerCase('B')      // returns 'b'
Character.toUpperCase('b')      // returns 'B'

```

Note that none of these methods require you to make an instance of a **Character** object. They are all **static**/class methods that take a **char** as a parameter (**int** in some cases) and return another primitive.

11.4 The Date and Calendar Classes

It is often necessary to use dates and times when programming. Let us take a look at the **Date** class provided in the **java.util** package. The **Date** class allows us to make data objects that incorporate time as well. The **java.util.Date** class is used to represent BOTH date and time. Dates are stored simply as a number, which happens to be the number of milliseconds since January 1, 1970, 00:00:00 GMT.



New dates are created with a call to a constructor as follows:

```
Date    today = new Date();
```

The result is an object that represents the current date and time and it looks something like this when displayed (of course it will vary depending on the day you run your code):

```
Thu Mar 26 14:39:17 EDT 2009
```

Notice that it shows the **day**, **month**, **day-of-month**, **hours**, **minutes**, **seconds**, **timezone** and **year** of the **Date** object. This is default behavior for this class. There are only three other useful methods in the **Date** class:

- **getTime()** - Returns a **long** representing this time in milliseconds.
- **after(Date d)** - Returns whether or not receiver date comes after the given date **d**.
- **before(Date d)** - Returns whether or not receiver date comes before the given date **d**.



Most other methods have been **deprecated** (which means they should not be used anymore).

In the class **Date** itself, there is no easy way to create a specific date (e.g., Feb. 13, 1992). Instead, we must use a different class to do this. In the current version of JAVA, **Calendar** objects are used to represent dates, instead of **Date** objects. **Calendar** is an abstract base class for converting between a **Date** object and a set of integer fields such as YEAR, MONTH, DAY, HOUR, and so on.



Although this **Calendar** class has many useful constants and methods (as you will soon see), we cannot make instances of it (i.e., we cannot say **new Calendar()**). Instead, the more specific kind of calendar called a **GregorianCalendar** is used.

The **java.util.GregorianCalendar** class is used to query and manipulate dates. Here are some of the available constructors ...

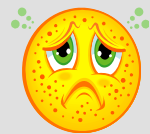
```
new GregorianCalendar()           // today's date
new GregorianCalendar(1999, 11, 31) // year, month, day
new GregorianCalendar(1968, 0, 8, 11, 55) // year, month, day, hours, mins
```

Notice that:

- the year is specified as 4-digits (e.g., 1968)
- months are specified from 0 to 11 (January being 0)
- days must be from 1 to 31
- hours and minutes are at the end of the constructor

Calendars do not display well. Here is what you would see if you tried displaying a **GregorianCalendar**:

```
java.util.GregorianCalendar[time=1178909251343,areFieldsSet=true,
areAllFieldsSet=true,lenient=true,zone=sun.util.calendar.ZoneInfo[id=
"America/New_York",offset=-18000000,dstSavings=3600000,useDaylight=true,
transitions=235,lastRule=java.util.SimpleTimeZone[id=America/New_York,
offset=-18000000,dstSavings=3600000,useDaylight=true,startYear=0,
startMode=3,startMonth=3,startDay=1,startDayOfWeek=1,startTime=7200000,
startMode=0,endMode=2,endMonth=9,endDay=-1,endDayOfWeek=1,endTime=
7200000,endTimeMode=0]],firstDayOfWeek=1,minimalDaysInFirstWeek=1,ERA=1,
YEAR=2007,MONTH=4,WEEK_OF_YEAR=19,WEEK_OF_MONTH=2,DAY_OF_MONTH=11,
DAY_OF_YEAR=131,DAY_OF_WEEK=6,DAY_OF_WEEK_IN_MONTH=2,AM_PM=1,HOUR=2,
HOUR_OF_DAY=14,MINUTE=47,SECOND=31,MILLISECOND=343,ZONE_OFFSET=
-18000000,DST_OFFSET=3600000]
```



Obviously, this is not pleasant. To display a **Calendar** in a friendlier manner, we can use the **getTime()** method, which actually returns a **Date** object (... not very intuitive ... I know). Consider these examples:

```
System.out.println(new GregorianCalendar().getTime()); // today
System.out.println(new GregorianCalendar(1999,11,31).getTime());
System.out.println(new GregorianCalendar(1968,0,8,11,55).getTime());
```

Here is the output (which of course varies with the current date):

```
Thu Mar 26 14:48:40 EDT 2009
Fri Dec 31 00:00:00 EST 1999
Mon Jan 08 11:55:00 EST 1968
```



The **isLeapYear(int year)** method returns whether or not the given year is a leap year for this calendar:

```
new GregorianCalendar().isLeapYear(2008); // returns true
new GregorianCalendar().isLeapYear(2009); // returns false
```



There are many other methods that we can use to query or alter the date which are inherited from the **Calendar** class.

For example, the **get(int field)** method is used along with some **static** constants to access information about the particular calendar date. For example, at the time of updating these notes the date was:

Thu Mar 26 15:05:35 EDT 2009

Consider the results (shown to the right) of each **get** method call in the code below. You should use **import java.util.Calendar** at the top of your code so that you can use these constants:


```
Calendar today = Calendar.getInstance();

today.get(Calendar.YEAR);           // 2009
today.get(Calendar.MONTH);         // 2
today.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_MONTH);  // 26
today.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_WEEK);   // 5
today.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_WEEK_IN_MONTH); // 4
today.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_YEAR);   // 85
today.get(Calendar.WEEK_OF_MONTH); // 4
today.get(Calendar.WEEK_OF_YEAR);  // 13
today.get(Calendar.HOUR);          // 3
today.get(Calendar.AM_PM);         // 1
today.get(Calendar.HOUR_OF_DAY);   // 15
today.get(Calendar.MINUTE);        // 5
today.get(Calendar.SECOND);        // 35
```

The value returned from the **get(int field)** method can be compared with other **Calendar** constants. For example,

```
if (aCalendar.get(Calendar.MONTH) == Calendar.APRIL) {...}
if (aCalendar.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_WEEK) == Calendar.SATURDAY) {...}
```

Here are some of the useful constants:

Calendar.SUNDAY Calendar.MONDAY Calendar.TUESDAY Calendar.WEDNESDAY Calendar.THURSDAY Calendar.FRIDAY Calendar.SATURDAY	Calendar.JANUARY Calendar.FEBRUARY Calendar.MARCH Calendar.APRIL Calendar.MAY Calendar.JUNE Calendar.AM	Calendar.JULY Calendar.AUGUST Calendar.SEPTEMBER Calendar.OCTOBER Calendar.NOVEMBER Calendar.DECEMBER Calendar.PM	
---	---	---	---

There is also a **set(int field, int value)** method that can be used to set the values for certain date fields:

```
aCalendar.set(Calendar.MONTH, Calendar.JANUARY);
aCalendar.set(Calendar.YEAR, 1999);
aCalendar.set(Calendar.AM_PM, Calendar.AM);
```

Other set methods allow the date and time to be changed ...



```
aCalendar.set(1999, Calendar.AUGUST, 15);
aCalendar.set(1999, Calendar.AUGUST, 15, 6, 45);
```

We can also format dates when we want to print them nicely. There is a **SimpleDateFormat** class (in the **java.text** package) that formats a **Date** object using one of many predefined formats. It does this by generating a **String** representation of the date. The constructor takes a **String** which indicates the desired format:

```
new SimpleDateFormat("MMM dd,yyyy");
```

The parameter in the method is a format string that specifies “how you want the date to look” when it is printed. By using different characters in the format string, you get different output for the date. The **format(Date d)** method in the **SimpleDateFormat** class is then used to actually do the work by applying the format to the given date. Here is an example:

```
import java.text.SimpleDateFormat;
...
SimpleDateFormat dateFormatter = new SimpleDateFormat("MMM dd,yyyy");
Date today = new Date();
String result = dateFormatter.format(today);

System.out.println(result);
```

Here is the result (which would vary, depending on the date):

```
Mar 26, 2009
```

Here are examples of format Strings and their effect on the date April 30th 2001 at 12:08 PM:

Format String	Resulting output
without formatting	Tue Apr 10 15:07:52 EDT 2001
"yyyy/MM/dd"	2001/04/30
"yy/MM/dd"	01/04/30
"MM/dd"	04/30
"MMM dd,yyyy"	Apr 30, 2001
"MMMM dd,yyyy"	April 30, 2001
"EEE. MMMM dd,yyyy"	Mon. April 30, 2001
"EEEE, MMMM dd,yyyy"	Monday, April 30, 2001
"h:mm a"	12:08 PM
"MMMM dd, yyyy (hh:mm a)"	April 30, 2001 (12:08PM)

For additional formatting information, check out the JAVA API specification. Here is a simple example that creates two dates. One representing today, the other representing a future date:

```
import java.util.*;
import java.text.SimpleDateFormat;

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

        Calendar    today = Calendar.getInstance();
        Calendar    future;
        int          difference;

        // Display Information about today's date and time
        System.out.println("Here is today:");
        System.out.println(today.getTime());
        System.out.println(today.get(Calendar.YEAR));
        System.out.println(today.get(Calendar.MONTH));
        System.out.println(today.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_MONTH));

        // Display Information about a future day's date and time
        future = Calendar.getInstance();
        future.set(2010, Calendar.MARCH, 5);
        System.out.println("Here is the future:");
        System.out.println(future.getTime());
        System.out.println(future.get(Calendar.YEAR));
        System.out.println(future.get(Calendar.MONTH));
        System.out.println(future.get(Calendar.DAY_OF_MONTH));

        // Test the formatting
        Date aDate = new Date();
        System.out.println(aDate);
        System.out.println(new SimpleDateFormat("yyyy/MM/dd").format(aDate));
        System.out.println(new SimpleDateFormat("yy/MM/dd").format(aDate));
        System.out.println(new SimpleDateFormat("MM/dd").format(aDate));
        System.out.println(new SimpleDateFormat("MMM dd,yyyy").format(aDate));
        System.out.println(new SimpleDateFormat("MMMM dd,yyyy").format(aDate));
    }
}
```

Here is the output from running this code on May 30th, 2011:

```
Here is today:
Mon May 30 15:37:47 EDT 2011
2011
4
30
Here is the future:
Fri Mar 05 15:37:47 EST 2010
2010
2
5
Mon May 30 15:37:47 EDT 2011
2011/05/30
11/05/30
05/30
May 30,2011
May 30,2011
```

Notice that the months start at **0**, and so March is month **#2**.

Although we can create and display simple dates, we have not done any manipulation at all. For instance, we may want to know how many working days there are between two dates. There are many more functions in the **Calendar** and **Date** classes, but we will not discuss them any further here. You would have to look at the API for the **Date**, **Calendar**, **GregorianCalendar** and **SimpleDateFormat** classes.

Supplemental Information (Formatting Dates with Strings)

We can also use the **String.format()** method to format dates and times. There are many flags that can be used (see the API for details) but here are some commonly used ones for displaying dates and times:

```
Date aDate = new Date();

System.out.println(String.format("%tc", aDate));
System.out.println(String.format("%tF", aDate));
System.out.println(String.format("%tR", aDate));
System.out.println(String.format("%tr", aDate));
System.out.println(String.format("%tD", aDate));
```

Here was the output when it was ran on March 26, 2009 at 3:26pm:

```
Thu Mar 26 15:26:56 EDT 2009
2009-03-26
15:26
03:26:56 PM
03/26/09
```