

Lecture Set 6: Exceptions & Comments

1. Exceptions
2. Comments



CMSC 131 Fall 2008
Jan Plane (adapted from Bonnie Dorr)

Exceptions

- Programs can generate errors
 - **Arithmetic**
Divide by zero, overflows, ...
 - **Object / Array**
Using a null reference, illegal array index, ...
 - **File and I/O**
Nonexistent file, attempt to read past the end of the file, (we'll see more about file I/O later in course), ...
 - **Application-specific**
Errors particular to application (e.g., attempt to remove a nonexistent customer from a database)
- In Java: error = **exception**
- What to do when an error occurs?
 1. Basically ignore it: Print an error message and terminate?
 2. Have the method handle it internally: Handle error in the code where the problem lies as best you can.
 3. Have the method pass it off to someone else to handle: Return "error code" so that whoever called this function can handle it.
 4. Modern language approach: Cause "exception" to be thrown (and caught (or processed) by any function up the stack trace)

CMSC 131 Fall 2008
Jan Plane (adapted from Bonnie Dorr)

1



Exception Behavior

- If program generates (“throws”) exception then default behavior is:

- Java clobbers (“aborts”) the program
- **Stack trace** is printed showing where exception was generated (red and blue in Eclipse window)

- Example

```
public static int mpg(int miles, int gallons){  
    return miles/gallons;  
}
```

- Throws an exception and terminates the program.



Throwing Exceptions Yourself

- To throw an exception, use throw command:

```
throw e;
```

e must evaluate to an exception object

- You can create exceptions just like other objects, e.g.:

```
RuntimeException e = new RuntimeException("Uh oh");
```

- `RuntimeException` is a class
- Calling `new` this way invokes constructor for this class
- `RuntimeException` generalizes other kinds of exceptions (e.g. `ArithmeticException`)

Exceptions, Classes and Types



- Exceptions are objects
- Some examples from the Java class library (mostly java.lang):
 - `ArithmeticException`: Used e.g. for divide by zero
 - `NullPointerException`: attempt to access an object with a null reference
 - `IndexOutOfBoundsException`: array or string index out of range
 - `ArrayStoreException`: attempting to store wrong type of object in array
 - `EmptyStackException`: attempt to pop an empty Stack (java.util)
 - `IOException`: attempt to perform an illegal input/output operation (java.io)
 - `NumberFormatException`: attempt to convert an invalid string into a number (e.g., when calling `Integer.parseInt()`)
 - `RuntimeException`: general run-time error (subsumes above)
 - `Exception`: The most generic type of exception

Java Exceptions in Detail



- Exceptions are (special) **objects** in Java
 - They are created from classes
 - The classes are derived (“**inherit**”) from a special class, **Throwable**
 - We will learn more about inheritance, etc., later
- Every exception object / class has:
 - `Exception(String message)`
Constructor taking an explanation as an argument
 - `String getMessage()`
Method returning the embedded message of the exception
 - `void printStackTrace()`
Method printing the call stack when the exception was thrown



Handling Exceptions

- Aborting program not always a good idea
 - E-mail: can't lose messages
 - E-commerce: must ensure correct handling of private info in case of crash
 - Antilock braking, air-traffic control: must recover and keep working
- **Java includes provides the programmer with mechanisms for recovering from exceptions**



Java Exception Terminology

- When an anomaly is detected during program execution, the JVM **throws** a particular type of exception
 - There are built-in exceptions
 - Users can also define their own (more later)
- To avoid crashing, a program can **catch** a thrown exception (if it isn't caught – you see the red and blue messages – stack trace)
- An exception generated by a piece of code can only be caught if the program is alerted. This process is called **trying** the piece of code.



Exception Propagation

- In previous example:
 - Exception thrown in one method ...
... but caught in another
 - Java uses **exception propagation** to look for exception handlers
 - When an exception occurs, Java pops back up the call stack to each of the calling methods to see whether the exception is being handled (by a try-catch block). This is **exception propagation**
 - The **first method** it finds that catches the exception will have its catch block executed. **Execution resumes normally** in the method after this catch block
 - If we get all the way back to main and no method catches this exception, Java catches it and **aborts** your program

CMSC 131 Fall 2008
Jan Plane (adapted from Bonnie Dorr)

8



Exception Handling: Example

- `DateReader.java`
 - Prompts user for a date in mm/dd/yyyy format
 - Prints year
- Program uses:
 - `substring` method
May throw `IndexOutOfBoundsException`
 - `Integer.parseInt` method
May throw `NumberFormatException`
 - `getYear` method (if `d` is null)
May throw `NullPointerException`
- How do we know about these exceptions? Javadoc!

<http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.5.0/docs/api/java/lang/package-summary.html>

CMSC 131 Fall 2008
Jan Plane (adapted from Bonnie Dorr)

9



Documentation Types

- Three Styles

- `// ...`
- `/* ... */`
- `/** ... */`

- Two Purposes

- Internal - those reading code
- External - those using the class

Javadoc Documentation Standard



- When documenting a method, list exceptions that method can throw
 - Use `@exception` tag
 - Be sure to include unhandled exceptions that operations in method may throw

- Example:

```
/**
 * Returns the year part of a date string
 * @param d date string in mm/dd/yyyy format
 * @return an integer representing the date
 * @exception IndexOutOfBoundsException
 * @exception NumberFormatException
 */
public static int getYear(String d) {
    ...
}
```