The Object Superclass
Fitting Classes Into the Java Hierarchy

java.lang.Object defines several methods that are designed to be overridden 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.
When to Override the equals(Object) Method

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).
How to Override the equals( Object ) Method

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(0bject)`

Obeying the general contract of `equals(0bject)` 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.
4. 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(0bject)` the corresponding field in this object.

After seeing an example application of this recipe we’ll motivate the proper implementation of `equals(0bject)` methods by introducing our first collection class, `ArrayList`. 
An Example `equals(Object)` Method

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

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.
4. 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:

```java
public boolean equals(Object other) {
    1: if (null == other) { return false; }
    2: if (this == other) { return true; }
    3: if (!(other instanceof Person)) { return false; }
    4: Person that = (Person) other;
    5: return this.name.equals(that.name);
}
```
Arrays and ArrayList

- 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:

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

Add items with add():

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

Traverse with for-each loop:

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

Note that the for-each loop implicitly uses an iterator.
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 default implementation that uses the object’s memory address. As a rule, whenever you override equals(Object), you should also override hashcode\(^1\).

\(^1\) hashcode() is used in objects that are keys in Map s. You’ll learn about Map s 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.

```java
abstract static class Person {
    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.
```
Override-Equivalence

Two methods are override-equivalent if:

- they have the same name,
- they have the same parameter lists, and
- their return values are covariant

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.
covariantReturn is covariant in Person and LostPerson:

```java
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;}
}

... because its covariantReturn’s return type, Person, is a supertype of LostPerson.
Non-Covariant Return

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

```java
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:

```java
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.