

Chapter 2

What's in a name?

An important feature of programming languages is that the vocabulary used can be expanded by the programmer. Suppose you were given the task of writing a web browser and one of the desired features was a menu which would list the user's favorite web pages. How would you write the commands to create such a menu? You could not actually type in the desired menu items because they would not be known until later when the program was actually being used. In fact, the contents of the menu might change based on user input while the program was running. What you must do instead is introduce a name that will function as a place holder for the information that belongs in the menu. You can use such a name to describe the contents of the menu as long as elsewhere in the program you include instructions that tell the computer what information should be associated with the name. Such names are somewhat like proper names used to refer to the characters in a story. You cannot determine their meanings by simply looking them up in a standard dictionary. Instead, the information that enables you to interpret them is part of the story itself. In this chapter, we will continue your introduction to programming in Java by discussing how to introduce and use such names in Java programs. In addition, we will introduce several details of the primitives used to manipulate GUI components.

2.1 Modifying Objects

Instructions like:

```
contentPane.add( new JButton( "Continue" ) );
```

provide the means to place a variety of GUI components on a computer screen. Many programs that use GUI components, however, do more than just place them on the screen and respond when users interact with the GUI components. They also modify the GUI components in various ways to reflect changes in the state of the program. For example, when you try to save a new file in an application, the program is likely to display a dialog box containing a text field in which you can type a name for the file, and a "Save" button to click once you finish typing the name. Typically, the "Save" button is initially disabled, but as soon as you type in a potential name for the file, the program somehow changes the state of the button by enabling it. Similarly, many word processing programs contain menus of styles you can apply to text. These programs usually also allow you to add new styles. When you add a new style, the program has to somehow modify the menu it created earlier by adding new items.

At some level, adding a new item to a menu is actually quite similar to adding a new GUI component to the display. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that just as we use a method invocation to add components to the window, we can also use method invocations to add items to menus and to modify GUI components in many other ways.

Recall that, in general, a method invocation has the form:

```
name.action( . . . arguments . . . )
```

where

action is the name of a method that describes the action we want performed,

name is a name associated with the object that we want to perform this action, and

arguments are 0 or more pieces of extra information that more precisely describe the action to be performed.

In order to write a method invocation that will modify a GUI component in a particular way, we need to know exactly what to use in place of the *name*, *action*, and *arguments* components that comprise a complete invocation. The *action*, and *arguments* are actually fairly simple. Associated with each type of GUI component there is a collection of methods that can be used to perform actions that affect GUI components of that type. We can look up the names of these methods in the documentation that comes with the Java language. In this documentation, we will also find descriptions of each method's behavior and of the arguments that each method expects.

For example, with a `JLabel`, a method named `setText` can be used to change the text displayed on the screen by the label. When this method is used, a single argument giving the new text to be displayed must be included. Thus, if `statusMessage` is a name that refers to a `JLabel`, then the method invocation

```
statusMessage.setText( "Host www.yhoo.com not responding" );
```

could be used to replace whatever message had been previously displayed by the label with the warning message "Host www.yhoo.com not responding".

Similarly, a method named `setEnabled` can be used to tell a `JButton` to become enabled (or disabled). This method also expects a single argument. If the argument provided is `true`, the button will become enabled. If the argument is `false`, the button will become disabled. Thus, if `saveButton` is a name that refers to a button, the instruction

```
saveButton.setEnabled( false );
```

can be used to disable that button.

In fact, the `setEnabled` action can be performed by any GUI component. So, if you wanted to disable a menu you could type something like

```
historyMenu.setEnabled( false );
```

This example illustrates why we have to provide the name of the object that should perform the desired action in a method invocation. If we just typed

```
setEnabled( false );
```

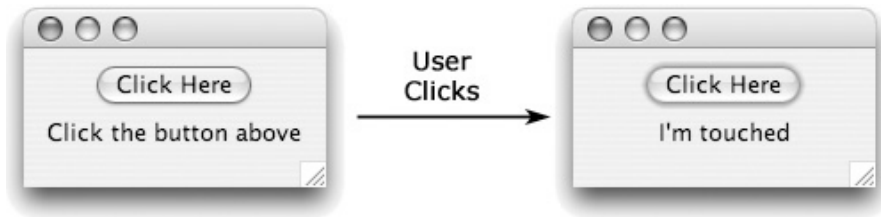


Figure 2.1: Behavior of proposed `NotSoTouchy` program

in a program that included both a button and a menu in its interface, Java would have no way to decide which one we wanted to disable. In general, to apply a method to a particular object, Java expects us to provide a name or some other means of identifying the object followed by a period and the name of the method to be used. So, in order to learn to use method invocations effectively, we need to learn how to associate names with GUI components and other entities in our programs.

2.2 Instance Variable Declarations

To introduce the process of associating a name with an object in Java we will construct another version of the `TouchyButton` program that we used as an example in the preceding chapter. In the original version, each time someone clicked the button, a new copy of the message “I’m touched” appeared on the screen. Our new version will be less repetitive. Rather than filling the screen with multiple copies of its message, the new version will only display its message once no matter how many times the button is pressed. We will name the new program `NotSoTouchy`

To accomplish this, we will make the program take a different approach to displaying its message. Instead of constructing a new `JLabel` each time the button is pressed, we will change the program so that the `JLabel` is created and displayed in the constructor before the button is pressed. Initially, instead of displaying “I’m touched” we will make the label display instructions telling the user to click the button. Then, when the button is pressed, we will use `setText` to make the label display the message “I’m touched”. Figure 2.1 illustrates the behavior we have in mind. If the button is pressed again, the program will use `setText` to make the label display the message “I’m touched” again, but since it already is displaying this message nothing will change on the screen.

Before we can use `setText` to change the appearance of a `JLabel`, we have to choose a name to associate with the label. Java puts a few restrictions on the names we can pick. Names that satisfy these restrictions are called *identifiers*. An identifier must start with a letter. After the first letter, you can use either letters, digits or underscores. So we could name our label something like `message`, `status` or `message2user`. Case is significant. Java would treat `userStatus` and `userstatus` as two completely distinct names. An identifier can be as long (or short) as you like, but it must be just one word (i.e., no blanks or punctuation marks are allowed in the middle of an identifier). A common convention used to make up for the inability to separate parts of a name using spaces is to start each part of a name with a capital letter. For example, we might use a name like `importantMessage`. It is also a convention to use identifiers starting with lower case letters to name objects to help distinguish them from the names of classes like `TouchyButton` and constants like `WINDOW_WIDTH`. Finally, words like `class` and `public` that are used as part of the Java language itself cannot be used as identifiers. These are called *reserved words* or *keywords*.

We can use a sequence of letters, numbers and underscores as an identifier in a Java program even if it has no meaning in English. Java would be perfectly happy if we named our label `e2d.iw0`. It is much better, however, to choose a name that suggests the role of an object. Such names make it much easier for you and others reading your code to understand its meaning. With this in mind, we will use the name `message` for the label as we complete this example.

There are two steps involved in associating a name with an object. Java requires that we first introduce each name we plan to use by including what is called a *declaration* of the name. Then, we associate a particular meaning with the name using an *assignment statement*. We discuss declarations in this section and introduce assignments in the following section.

The syntax of a declaration is very simple. For each name you plan to use, you enter the word `private` followed by the name of the type of object to which the name will refer and finally the name you wish to introduce. In addition, like commands, each declaration is terminated by a semi-colon. So, to declare the name `message`, which we intend to use to refer to a `JLabel`, we type the declaration:

```
private JLabel message;
```

The form and placement of a declaration within a program determines where in the program the name can be used. This region is called the *scope* of the name. In particular, we will eventually want to refer to the name `message` in both the constructor for the `NotSoTouchy` class and in the `buttonClicked` method. The declaration of a name that will be shared between a constructor and a method or between several methods should be placed within the braces that surround the body of our class, but outside of the constructor and method bodies. Names declared in this way are called *instance variables*. We recommend that instance variable declarations be placed before the constructor and method definitions. The inclusion of the word `private` in an instance variable declaration indicates that only code within the class we are defining should be allowed to refer to this name. The `public` qualifier that we include in method declarations, by way of contrast, indicates that the method is accessible outside of the class.

The declaration of an instance variable does not determine to which object the name will refer. Instead, it merely informs Java that the name will be used at some point in the program and tells Java the type of object that will eventually be associated with the name. The purpose of such a declaration is to enable Java to give you helpful feedback if you make a mistake. Suppose that after deciding to use the name “message” in a program we made a typing mistake and typed “massage” in one line where we meant to type “message”. It would be nice if when Java tried to run this program it could notice such a mistake and provide advice on how to fix the error similar to that provided by a spelling checker. To do this, however, Java needs the equivalent of a dictionary against which it can check the names used in the program. The declarations included in a program provide this dictionary. If Java encounters a name that was not declared it reports it as the equivalent of a spelling mistake.

Based on this discussion, the contents of the program we want to write might begin with the code shown in Figure 2.2.

2.3 Assigning Meanings to Variable Names

Before a name can be used in a command like:

```
message.setText( "I'm touched" );
```

```

import squint.*;
import javax.swing.*;

public class NotSoTouchy extends GUIManager {

    private final int WINDOW_WIDTH  = 170;
    private final int WINDOW_HEIGHT = 100;

    private JLabel message;

    public NotSoTouchy() {
        this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );
        contentPane.add( new JButton( "Click Here" ) );
        . . .
    }
    . . .
}

```

Figure 2.2: Declaring `message` in the `NotSoTouchy` program

we must associate the name with a particular object using a command Java calls an *assignment statement*. An assignment statement consists of a name followed by an equal sign and a phrase that describes the object we would like to associate with that name. As an example, an assignment statement to associate the name `message` with a `JLabel` that initially displayed instructions for the user of our program might look like:

```
message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );
```

In this assignment statement, we use the construction that creates the `JLabel` as a sub-phrase to describe the object we want associated with the name `message`.

Ordering is critical in an assignment. The name being defined must be placed on the left side of the equal sign while the phrase that describes the object to which the name should refer belongs on the right side. Java will reject the command as nonsense if we interchange the order of the name and the construction. It may be easier to remember this rule if you recognize that the correct ordering of the parts of an assignment statement is similar to the way definitions are presented in a dictionary. The name being defined comes before its definition.

Java will also reject an assignment statement that attempts to associate a name with an object that is not of the type included in the name's declaration. The declaration included in Figure 2.2 states that `message` will be used to refer to a `JLabel`. If we included the assignment

```
message = new JButton( "Click Here" );
```

in our program, it would be identified as an error because it attempts to associate the name with an object that is a `JButton` rather than with a `JLabel`.

When we use a construction of a GUI component as an argument in a method invocation of the form

```

import squint.*;
import javax.swing.*;

public class NotSoTouchy extends GUIManager {

    private final int WINDOW_WIDTH = 170;
    private final int WINDOW_HEIGHT = 100;

    private JLabel message;

    public NotSoTouchy() {
        this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );
        contentPane.add( new JButton( "Click Here" ) );
        message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );
        contentPane.add( message );
    }

    public void buttonClicked() {
        message.setText( "I'm touched" );
    }
}

```

Figure 2.3: Complete program illustrating use of an instance variable

```

contentPane.add( new JLabel( "I'm Touched" ) );

```

as we have in all our earlier examples, the command both creates the specified GUI component and adds it to the program's display. When a GUI component construction is instead used as a subphrase of an assignment, execution of the assignment instruction creates the object and associates a name with it but does not add it to the display. So, if all we do is execute the assignment statement

```

message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );

```

nothing new will appear in the program's window.

This gives us a chance to immediately show how we can make use of the name `message`. We want the label to appear on the screen. To make something appear on the screen we have to provide it as an argument to the `contentPane`'s `add` method. The name `message` now refers to the label we want to add. So, using this name as an argument to the `add` method as in

```

contentPane.add( message );

```

will now make the label appear in the display. Basically, once we have used an assignment to associate a name with an object, we can use that name whenever we want to tell the computer to do something with that object.

Given this introduction to associating names with objects, we can now show the complete code for our `NotSoTouchy` program. The code is shown in Figure 2.3. Even though it is very short and simple, this program includes examples of all three of the basic steps involved in using variable names: declarations, assignments, and references.

- The declaration:

```
private JLabel message;
```

appears at the beginning of the class body.

- An assignment of a meaning to the name appears on the third line of the constructor:

```
message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );
```

- References to the label through its name appear in both the last line of the constructor :

```
contentPane.add( message );
```

and the only instruction in the `buttonClicked` method:

```
message.setText( "I'm touched" );
```

We emphasize these three aspects of using variable names because they apply not just to this example but to almost any use of a variable name in Java. To illustrate this, suppose someone pointed out that it seemed silly to be able to click the button in our program over and over when it really only did something on the first click. We could address this complaint by disabling the button after it was clicked using the `setEnabled` method. To do this, we would follow the same three steps identified above. Assuming that we decided to call the button `theButton`, we would first add a declaration of the form:

```
private JButton theButton;
```

just before or after the declaration of `message`. Then, we would associate the name with an actual `JButton` by replacing the line

```
contentPane.add( new JButton( "Click Here" ) );
```

with the pair of lines

```
theButton = new JButton( "Click Here" );
contentPane.add( theButton );
```

Finally, we would add the instruction

```
theButton.setEnabled( false );
```

to the `buttonClicked` method.

2.4 Local Variables

In the examples considered in the last section, the variables we used were essential to the instructions we wanted to write in two distinct sections of the program's code, the constructor and the `buttonClicked` method. The GUI components associated with these names were constructed and added to the content pane in the constructor, but modified later in `buttonClicked`. Whenever a

variable is associated with an object that is shared between a constructor and a method or between several methods in this way, the variable should be declared as what we call an instance variable. This is done by placing its declaration outside of the bodies of the constructor and the methods (and typically before the constructor and method definitions).

There are other situations, however, where all the operations we wish to perform with some object occur within the constructor or within a single method. In such situations, Java allows us to define names in such a way that their meanings only apply within the section of code in which they are needed. Such names are called *local variables*. Using local variables rather than instance variables when possible is considered good programming style. As your knowledge of programming increases and you write larger and larger programs, you will quickly discover that the overall structure of a program can become very complex. One way to minimize this overall complexity is to specify any details of the program that don't need to be known globally in such a way that they are local to the part of the program for which they are relevant. Using local variables is a good example of this practice.

To illustrate the use of a local variable, let's make a simple, cosmetic change to the `NotSoTouchy` program shown in Figure 2.3. In particular, let's make the text "Click Here" appear in red instead of the default black.

When GUI components are drawn on the screen, the computer uses one color, the foreground color, for the text shown, and another color, the background color, to fill the remainder of the component. By default, the foreground color is black and the background color is white. The methods `setForeground` and `setBackground` can be invoked to change the colors used. Both methods expect a single argument specifying the color to use. The names `Color.RED`, `Color.BLUE`, `Color.GREEN`, and a few other similar names can be used to describe common colors.¹ So, if the name `theButton` were associated with our program's button, the invocation

```
theButton.setForeground( Color.RED );
```

could be used to make the words "Click Here" appear in red.

If this is all we want to do with the button (in particular, if we don't want to try to disable it in the `buttonClicked` method), then all the operations that involve the button will occur in the constructor. We will construct the button in the constructor, we will set its foreground color, and we will add it to the content pane. In such a situation, it is best to declare `theButton` as a local variable within the constructor rather than as an instance variable.

Declaring a local variable is quite simple. The main difference between local variable declarations and instance variable declarations is that the line that declares a local variable is placed inside the body of the constructor or method where the name will be used rather than outside of the definitions of the constructors and methods. Doing this tells Java that the name will be private, not just to its class, but to the constructor or method in which it is declared. Therefore, the word `private` is not included in a local variable declaration. The revised definition of the `NotSoTouchy` constructor would contain the code shown in Figure 2.4.

¹These names are actually defined in a library known as the Abstract Windowing Toolkit (or AWT) rather than in `Squint` or `Swing`. Therefore, to use these names we have to add an `import` for the library "java.awt.*" to our program. Java also provides a complete mechanism to describe custom colors which we will discuss later.


```

public NotSoTouchy() {
    this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );

    JButton theButton;
    theButton = new JButton( "Click Here" );
    theButton.setForeground( Color.RED );
    contentPane.add( theButton );

    message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );
    contentPane.add( message );
}

```

Figure 2.4: A method definition including a local variable

2.5 GUI Layout with Panels

In Section 1.5.3 we explained that the simple approach we are taking to the layout of GUI components sometimes produces undesirable results. The program discussed in that section created four `JTextField`s intended to be used to enter an individual's address. Each `JTextField` was paired with an identifying `JLabel`. In Figure 1.16, we showed how the layout manager might under some circumstances unnecessarily separate a `JLabel` from the component it was intended to label. At that time, we promised that we would introduce a mechanism to address this issue. This is a good time to keep that promise since the mechanism used will give us a chance to show you a few more examples of the use of local variables.

You should be familiar with the fact that when we want to add a component to the display, we write an invocation of the form

```
contentPane.add( . . . );
```

When we first introduced this mechanism, we explained that `contentPane` was a name for the interior of the program's window. By now, we know that when we want to associate an object with a name, we first have to tell Java the type of the object to which the name will refer. Will it identify a `JButton`, a `JLabel`, or something else? So it seems fair to ask for the same sort of information about the name `contentPane`. What type of object does the name `contentPane` refer to?

`contentPane` refers to an object that belongs to the class `JPanel`. A `JPanel` is essentially a box into which one can insert GUI components that you want displayed as a group. In a program, we can construct a `JPanel` and then add a collection of related components to the panel's contents in much the same manner that we would add them to the `contentPane`. More importantly, a `JPanel` is also a GUI component itself. That means that after we have constructed a `JPanel` and placed some other components inside of it, we can add the `JPanel` to the `contentPane` and thereby add all of the components it contains to our program's display as a group.

For example, suppose that we place a `JLabel` that displays the label "Street Addr:" and a `JTextField` together in a new `JPanel`. We can then add these two components to our display by adding the `JPanel` to the `contentPane` instead of adding the two components to the `contentPane` separately. This will ensure that these two components will be displayed together if at all possible.

```

JPanel streetPanel;

streetPanel = new JPanel();

streetPanel.add( new JLabel( "Street Addr:" ) );
streetPanel.add( new JTextField( 29 ) );

contentPane.add( streetPanel );

```

Figure 2.5: Instructions to add a `JPanel` holding two components to the display

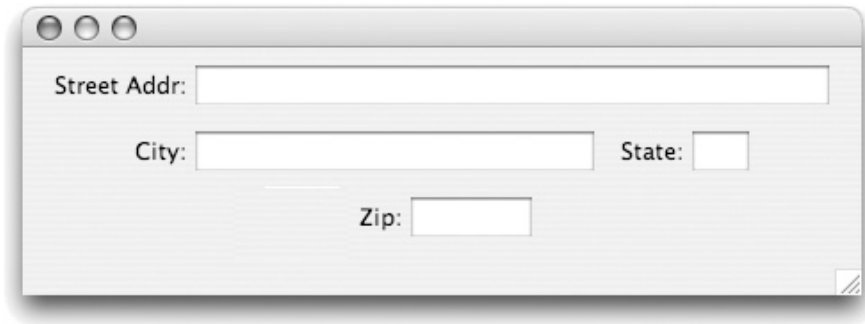


Figure 2.6: `JPanels` can be used to group components in the display

The actual code to accomplish this is fairly simple. The `JPanel` does not expect any arguments in its construction. Therefore, the code shown in Figure 2.5 can be used to create the two desired components and add them to the display as part of a single sub-panel.

The first line of this code declares the name `streetPanel` that we will use to refer to our `JPanel`. We will only need to perform operations on the panel within the constructor, so we declare `streetPanel` as a local variable. The following line constructs an empty panel and associates it with the name `streetPanel`. The next two lines are identical to lines from the original program (as shown in Figure 1.11) except the name of the program’s main `JPanel`, the `contentPane`, has been replaced by the name `streetPanel`. The last line adds the sub-panel we have formed to the content pane.

Following this pattern, we can create three additional `JPanels` to hold the labels and text fields for the remaining components of the address: the city, state and zip code. For now, let us assume these `JPanels` are named `cityPanel`, `statePanel`, and `zipPanel`. Figure 2.6 shows how the display of this program might look if its window was narrowed just a bit, just as we did to the earlier version of the program to produce the display shown in Figure 1.16. When we narrowed the window of the earlier version of the program, the label “Zip:” became separated from its text field because while there was enough room for the label on the second line of the display, there wasn’t enough room for the text field. If you look at Figure 2.6 carefully, you can see that there is still enough room for the label “Zip:” on the second line of the display. The layout manager for the window, however, doesn’t see the label and the text field as separate components. Instead, it sees a single `JPanel` that contains both of them. Since the entire panel cannot fit on the second line, it puts the label

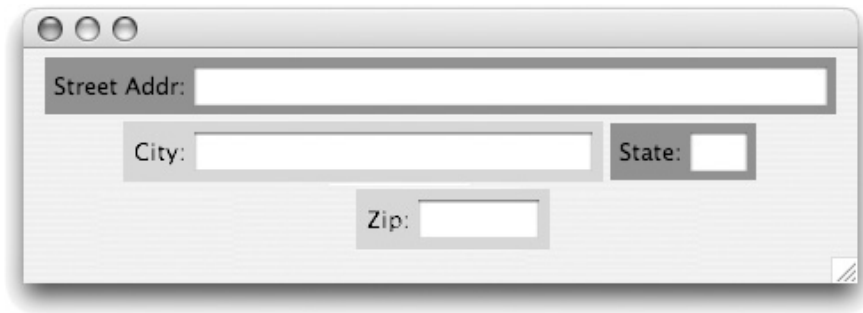


Figure 2.7: Coloring makes JPanels visible in the display

and the text field together on the third line as desired.

We can make the effect of the JPanels visible by using the `setBackground` method to change the colors of the JPanels. In particular, if we add the instructions

```
zipPanel.setBackground( Color.YELLOW );
statePanel.setBackground( Color.GRAY );
cityPanel.setBackground( Color.YELLOW );
streetPanel.setBackground( Color.GRAY );
```

to our program and run it again in a narrow window, it produces the display shown in Figure 2.7. Now it should be clear how the JPanels are grouping the components in the display.

There is one last interesting change we can make to this program. Consider how the name `streetPanel` is used in the program. It is clearly very important during the five lines shown in figure 2.5, but it isn't used at all after that. The names `cityPanel`, `statePanel`, and `zipPanel` have similarly short spans during which they are actually of use in the program. As a result, we can instead use just one name to refer to all four of these JPanels. Obviously, this name can only refer to one panel at a time. It will refer to the panel that we named `streetPanel` for the five instructions that work with that panel, then we will change its meaning to make it refer to the panel that was originally named `cityPanel` and so on.

The key to doing this is that Java allows us to use an assignment statement to change the meaning of a name at any point in a program where that is useful. This should not strike you as too surprising. We frequently use names in this way outside the world of programming. The name "president of the class" often changes its meaning once a year. Of course, it would be bad to use `streetPanel` or any of the other three names we suggested earlier for this new name. Instead, we will use the identifier `currentPanel`. The complete code to construct the address entry display using this approach is shown in Figure 2.8. Note that the name is only declared once in the first line of this code, but then is associated with four different JPanels at different points in the program.

2.6 More on Declarations

There are three additional features of variable declarations that we want to introduce at this point. They are not essential features, but they can help you write programs that are more concise and clear.

```
JPanel currentPanel;

currentPanel = new JPanel();
currentPanel.add( new JLabel( "Street Addr:" ) );
currentPanel.add( new JTextField( 29 ) );
contentPane.add( currentPanel );

currentPanel = new JPanel();
currentPanel.add( new JLabel( "City:" ) );
currentPanel.add( new JTextField( 18 ) );
contentPane.add( currentPanel );

currentPanel = new JPanel();
currentPanel.add( new JLabel( "State:" ) );
currentPanel.add( new JTextField( 2 ) );
contentPane.add( currentPanel );

currentPanel = new JPanel();
currentPanel.add( new JLabel( "Zip:" ) );
currentPanel.add( new JTextField( 5 ) );
contentPane.add( currentPanel );
```

Figure 2.8: Changing the meaning associated with a variable

2.6.1 Initializers

We have emphasized that in Java, the act of introducing a name is logically distinct from the act of associating a meaning with a name. One is accomplished using a declaration. The other is accomplished using an assignment statement. It is frequently the case, however, that a programmer knows that a certain value should be associated with a name when it is first introduced. In this situation, Java allows the programmer to write a declaration that looks somewhat like a hybrid between a declaration and an assignment statement.

As an example, consider the first two statements of the code we wrote to illustrate the use of `JPanel`s shown in Figure 2.8:

```
JPanel currentPanel;  
  
currentPanel = new JPanel();
```

Java allows you to combine these two lines into a single declaration of the form

```
JPanel currentPanel = new JPanel();
```

Note that while this looks like an assignment statement with a type name added to the beginning it is considered a declaration with an *initializer* rather than an assignment statement.

Initializers can be used in the declarations of instance variables as well as in local variables. Figure 2.9 shows yet another version of the “touchy button” program that incorporates the use of such initializers. Note that the constructions to create the `JButton` and the `JLabel` have been moved out of the constructor and into the instance variable declarations for `message` and `theButton`.

The use of initializers in declarations often provides the clearest way to specify the initial value associated with a name. In the next few chapters, however, we will deliberately make sparing use of this feature. We do this primarily to emphasize the distinction between declaring a name and assigning a value to a name. Novice Java programmer frequently confuse these two steps in the use of variable names. In a few chapters, after you become comfortable with this distinction we will use initializers more frequently.

2.6.2 Making it final

By now, you might have noticed that the two lines we put at the beginning of the body of all our class definitions:

```
private final int WINDOW_WIDTH = 170;  
private final int WINDOW_HEIGHT = 100;
```

look a lot like declarations with initializers. If you ignore the second word on each line, you are left with the words `private`, followed by the word `int` (which refers to the collection of values usually called the integer numbers), an identifier, then an equal sign, and a value to associate with the identifier as its initial value. The only thing that is odd about these lines is that they include the word `final` after the word `private`.

The word `final` tells Java that the values associated with these names by their initializers will be the only values ever associated with these names. In fact, if you include the word `final` in such a declaration and later try to use an assignment statement to change the meaning of the name, Java will identify this as an error in your program.

```

import squint.*;
import java.awt.*;
import javax.swing.*;

public class NotSoTouchy extends GUIManager {

    private final int WINDOW_WIDTH = 170;
    private final int WINDOW_HEIGHT = 100;

    private JLabel message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );

    private JButton theButton = new JButton( "Click Here" );

    public NotSoTouchy() {
        this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );
        theButton.setForeground( Color.RED );
        contentPane.add( theButton );
        contentPane.add( message );
    }

    public void buttonClicked() {
        message.setText( "I'm touched" );
    }
}

```

Figure 2.9: A program illustrating initializers in instance variable declarations

Variables declared to be `final` are called *constant names*. As the names we have used for these two variables suggest, it is a convention that identifiers used as constant names are composed of all upper case letters.

The primary purpose for using constant names is to make your program more readable. As we mentioned earlier, the role of the arguments to `createWindow` would be fairly clear in the line

```
this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );
```

even to someone who didn't fully understand what the `createWindow` method did. On the other hand, the purpose of the numbers 170 and 100 in

```
this.createWindow( 170, 100 );
```

is not so obvious.

2.6.3 Declaring Collections of Similar Names

One final feature of Java name declarations is the fact that you can declare several names that will refer to values of the same type in a single declaration. For example, we could either declare the names `streetPanel`, `cityPanel`, `statePanel`, and `zipPanel` used in our discussion of `JPanels` using four separate declarations of the form:

```
JPanel streetPanel;  
JPanel cityPanel;  
JPanel statePanel;  
JPanel zipPanel;
```

or within a single declaration of the form

```
JPanel streetPanel, cityPanel, statePanel, zipPanel;
```

When multiple variables are declared together in this way, it is possible to include initializers for each of the names as in:

```
private final int WINDOW_WIDTH = 600, WINDOW_HEIGHT = 200;
```

While including multiple names in a single declaration is sometimes helpful, this feature should be used with caution. For the sake of readability, you should only declare names together if they are used in nearly identical ways.

2.7 ints and Strings

One other interesting aspect of the declarations of `WINDOW_WIDTH` and `WINDOW_HEIGHT` is that they show that it is possible to associate names with things other than GUI components. There are two interesting collections of values that will be used often in our programs and with which we will want to associate names. As mentioned above, the name `int` refers to the collection of integer values. If we want to do any kind of calculation or counting in a program, we will clearly want to refer to `ints` using variable names. The other important class of values is the collection of sequences of letters strung together to form words and sentences. We have used such values when creating `JButtons` and `JLabels`. The information "Click Here" used in the construction

```
new JButton( "Click Here" )
```

is an example of such a sequence of letters. In Java, the name `String` is used to refer to the collection of such sequences.²

Just as we have seen that we can declare variable names to refer to GUI components, we can declare variables that refer to `ints` and `Strings`. The variables `WINDOW_WIDTH` and `WINDOW_HEIGHT` are examples of `int` variables. We could easily use a `String` variable in a similar way. If we included the declaration

```
private final String BUTTON_LABEL = "Click Here";
```

right after the declaration of `WINDOW_HEIGHT` in Figure 2.9, we could then rewrite the declaration of `theButton` as

```
private JButton theButton = new JButton( BUTTON_LABEL );
```

As a much more interesting use of a variable that refers to something that is not a GUI component, let's see how to make a program count. In particular, we will change `TouchyButton` once more to produce a version that displays a message of the form "I've been touched 4 time(s)" each time its button is clicked, where the value 4 will be replaced by the actual number of times the button has been clicked.

First, we need to associate a name with the number that describes how many times the button has been clicked. Initially the value associated with this name should be 0, so we can declare the name using the declaration

```
private int numberOfClicks;
```

Then, in the constructor for our class we will include the assignment

```
numberOfClicks = 0;
```

to associate the correct initial value with this variable.

Obviously, the meaning associated with this variable will have to change as the program runs. We have seen that we can associate a new value with a name by executing an assignment statement. To change the value of `numberOfClicks`, we will say

```
numberOfClicks = numberOfClicks + 1;
```

In all our previous examples of assignments, the right hand side has been a construction. When we introduced the assignment statement, we did not say this was required. Instead, we simply said that the right hand side should describe the value with which the name on the left should be associated. When working with numbers, Java interprets the plus sign in the usual way. Accordingly, if `numberOfClicks` is associated with 0, then `numberOfClicks + 1` describes the value 1. Therefore, after the assignment is executed once, `numberOfClicks` will be associated with 1. The right hand

²It is actually not quite precise to limit ourselves to sequences of letters. We might want to create a button by saying

```
new JButton( "Choice 1." )
```

In this example, "Choice 1." is definitely a `String` even though it contains the symbols "1" and "." which are considered digits and punctuation marks rather than letters. To be accurate we should describe `Strings` as sequences of symbols.

side of the assignment now describes the value 2. Therefore, if the assignment is executed a second time, the value associated with `numberOfClicks` will become 2. In fact, the value associated with `numberOfClicks` will always be equal to the number of times the assignment has been executed.

The last detail required to complete the program we have in mind is that Java interprets the plus sign a bit differently when it is used to combine a `String` value with a number or another `String`. Instead of trying to perform the arithmetic addition operation, it sticks the sequence of symbols that make up the `String` and the sequence of digits that describe the number together to form a longer sequence. This operation is called *concatenation*. For example, when `numberOfClicks` is associated with the number 4, the phrase

```
"I've been touched " + numberOfClicks + " time(s)"
```

describes the `String`

```
"I've been touched 4 time(s)"
```

The spaces within the quoted strings `"I've been touched "` and `" time(s)"` are required or no spaces will be left around the digits placed between them.

The complete code for the simple counting program is shown in Figure 2.10. We have included lines of text in this program that are intended to help explain the program to a human reader rather than the computer. The details of the mechanisms Java provides for such explanatory notes, which are known as *comments* are discussed in the next section.

2.8 Comments

In the program shown in Figure 2.10, we introduce one additional and very important feature of Java, the *comment*. As programs become complex, it can be difficult to understand their operation by just reading the Java code. It is often useful to annotate this code with English text that explains more about its purpose and organization. In Java, you can include such comments in the program text itself as long as you follow conventions designed to enable the computer to distinguish the actual instructions it is to follow from the comments. For short comments, this is done by preceding such comments with a pair of slashes (`"/"`). Any text that appears on a line after a pair of slashes is treated as a comment by Java.

The class declaration in Figure 2.10 is preceded by three lines of comments. If we have multiple lines of comments, we can write them a bit more simply by starting the comments with a `"/*` and ending them with `*/` as follows:

```
/*  
  A program that responds when its user clicks on a button  
  by displaying a count of the total number of times the  
  button has been clicked.  
*/
```

Many programmers prefer to format multi-line comments as shown in the figure:

```
/*  
 * A program that responds when its user clicks on a button  
 * by displaying a count of the total number of times the  
 * button has been clicked.  
*/
```

```

import squint.*;
import javax.swing.*;

/*
 * A program that responds when its user clicks on a button
 * by displaying a count of the total number of times the
 * button has been clicked.
 */

public class TouchCounter extends GUIManager {

    // The desired dimensions of the program window
    private final int WINDOW_WIDTH = 170, WINDOW_HEIGHT = 100;

    // Used to display instructions and counter messages
    private JLabel message;

    // Keeps track of the number of times the button has been clicked
    private int numberOfClicks;

    /*
     * Place a button and the instructions in a window
     */
    public TouchCounter() {
        this.createWindow( WINDOW_WIDTH, WINDOW_HEIGHT );

        numberOfClicks = 0;

        contentPane.add( new JButton( "Click Here" ) );

        message = new JLabel( "Click the button above" );
        contentPane.add( message );
    }

    /*
     * Display a counter of the number of clicks
     */
    public void buttonClicked() {
        numberOfClicks = numberOfClicks + 1;
        message.setText( "I've been touched " + numberOfClicks + " time(s)" );
    }
}

```

Figure 2.10: Using an int variable to count

While Java only considers the initial “/*” and final “*/”, the “*”s at the beginning of new lines make it easier for the reader to see that they are part of a comment.

2.9 Summary

In this chapter we explored the importance of using names to refer to the objects our programs manipulate. Instance variable names are used to share information between constructors and methods and local variables provide the means to associate a name with an object for use within a single constructor or method. We saw that both types of variables have to be declared before they can be used in a program, and that the actual meaning associated with a name can be specified either in an assignment statement that is separate from the declaration or by an initializer included in its declaration.

We also presented several additional aspects of working with GUI components. We learned about methods like `setText`, `setForeground`, and `setEnabled` that can be used to change the properties of GUI components. We also discussed how to use `JPanels` to gain a little more control over the positioning of GUI components in a program’s window.