

Writing classes

Java Reference

Fields, constructor & methods

A class is a blueprint for objects. Its fields store data, its constructor sets up a new object, and its methods are the actions. `this.name` means "this object's **name**". Create an object with `new`.

```
public class Main {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        Dog d = new Dog("Rex", 3);
        System.out.println(d.describe()); // Rex is 3 years old
        d.haveBirthday();
        System.out.println(d.describe()); // Rex is 4 years old
    }
}

class Dog {
    private String name;
    private int age;

    public Dog(String name, int age) { // constructor
        this.name = name;
        this.age = age;
    }

    public String describe() {
        return name + " is " + age + " years old";
    }

    public void haveBirthday() {
        age++;
    }
}
```

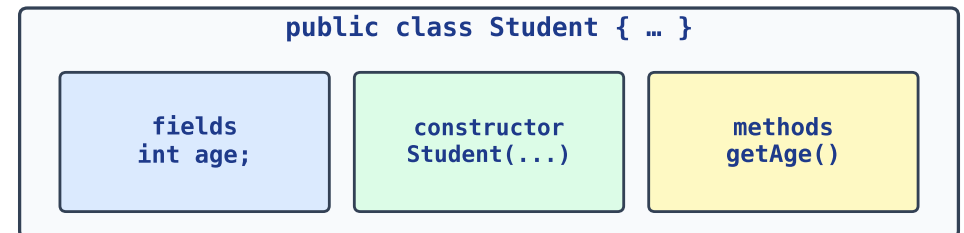
A **static** member belongs to the class itself, not to any one object. Call a static method on the class name — like `Math.max` — and a static field is shared by every object:

```
public class Main {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        System.out.println(Counter.made()); // 0
        new Counter();
        new Counter();
        System.out.println(Counter.made()); // 2
    }
}

class Counter {
    private static int count = 0; // shared by ALL Counter objects

    public Counter() { count++; }

    public static int made() { // called on the class:
        ↪ Counter.made()
        return count;
    }
}
```



Exam tip: constructor name matches the class; fields store state; methods do work

Fields store state; constructor builds; methods act

Encapsulation

Encapsulation means hiding data behind methods. Mark fields **private** so outside code can't touch them directly; expose an accessor (getter) to read, and a method to change them safely. The method can **guard** the data — here a deposit must be positive.

```
public class Main {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        Account a = new Account(100);
        a.deposit(50);
        a.deposit(-999);           // rejected by the guard
        System.out.println(a.getBalance()); // 150
    }
}

class Account {
    private int balance;           // hidden from outside

    public Account(int start) {
        balance = start;
    }

    public void deposit(int amount) {
        if (amount > 0) balance += amount; // guard keeps balance
        ↪ valid
    }

    public int getBalance() {       // accessor (getter)
        return balance;
    }
}
```

Common mistakes

- A constructor has the class name and no return type (not even **void**).
- Use **this.field** to tell a field apart from a parameter with the same name.
- Make fields **private** and reach them through getter/setter methods (encapsulation).