Building Java Programs

Chapter 5: Program Logic and Indefinite Loops

Lecture outline

- fencepost loops

- indefinite loops
  - the `while` loop
  - sentinel loops

Fencepost loops

reading: 4.1

The fencepost problem

- Problem: Write a static method named `printNumbers` that prints each number from 1 to a given maximum, separated by commas.

  For example, the method call:

  ```
  printNumbers(5)
  ```

  should print:

  ```
  1, 2, 3, 4, 5
  ```

Flawed solutions

- ```
  public static void printNumbers(int max) {
      for (int i = 1; i <= max; i++) {
          System.out.print(i + ", ");
      }
      System.out.println();  // to end the line of output
  }
  ```
  - Output from `printNumbers(5)`:

    `1, 2, 3, 4, 5,`

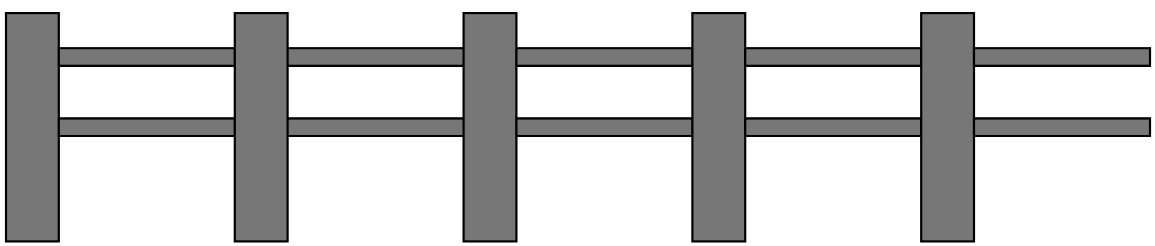
- ```
  public static void printNumbers(int max) {
      for (int i = 1; i <= max; i++) {
          System.out.print(", " + i);
      }
      System.out.println();  // to end the line of output
  }
  ```
  - Output from `printNumbers(5)`:

    `, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5`

Fence post analogy

- We print *n* numbers but need only *n* - 1 commas.
- This problem is similar to the task of building a fence with lengths of wire separated by posts.
  - often called a *fencepost problem*
  - If we repeatedly place a post and wire,
    the last post will have an extra dangling wire.
  - A flawed algorithm:

    for (length of fence) {
    place some post.
    place some wire.
    }



Fencepost loop

- The solution is to add an extra statement outside the loop that places the initial "post."
  - This is sometimes also called a *fencepost loop* or a "loop-and-a-half" solution.

  - The revised algorithm:

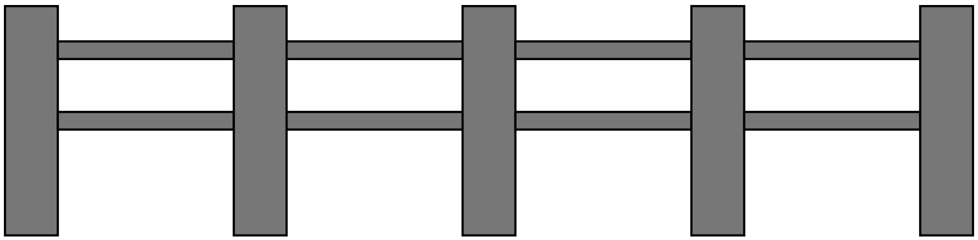
  place a post.

  *for (length of fence **- 1**) {*

      place some wire.

      place some post.

  }



Fencepost method solution

- A version of `printNumbers` that works:

```
public static void printNumbers(int max) {
    System.out.print(1);
    for (int i = 2; i <= max; i++) {
        System.out.print(", " + i);
    }
    System.out.println();  // to end the line of output
}
```

Output from `printNumbers(5)`:

```
1, 2, 3, 4, 5
```

Fencepost question

- Write a method named `printPrimes` that, when given a maximum number, prints all prime numbers up to that maximum in the following format.
  - Example: `printPrimes(50)` prints

    `[2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31, 37, 41, 43, 47]`

Fencepost answer

```
public class Primes {
    public static void main(String[] args) {
        printPrimes(50);
        printPrimes(1000);
    }

    // Prints all prime numbers up to the given max.
    public static void printPrimes(int max) {
        System.out.print("[2");
        for (int i = 3; i <= max; i++) {
            if (countFactors(i) == 2) {
                System.out.print(", " + i);
            }
        }
        System.out.println("]");
    }

    // see ch04-1 slides for countFactors method
}
```

while loops

reading: 5.1

Definite loops

- **definite loop**: One that executes a known number of times.
  - The `for` loops we have seen so far are definite loops.

  - We often use language like,
    - "Repeat these statements *N* times."
    - "For each of these 10 things, ..."

  - Examples:
    - Print "hello" 10 times.
    - Find all the prime numbers up to an integer *n*.
    - Print each odd number between 5 and 127.

Indefinite loops

- **indefinite loop**: One where it is not obvious in advance how many times it will execute.
  - The `while` loops in this chapter are indefinite loops.

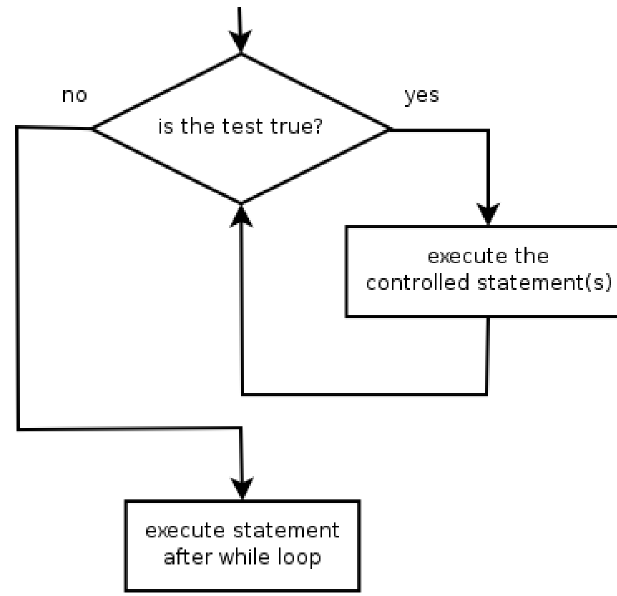
  - We often use language like,
    - "Keep looping *as long as* or *while* this condition is still true."
    - "Don't stop looping *until* the following happens."

  - Examples:
    - Prompt the user until they type a non-negative number.
    - Print random numbers until a prime number is printed.
    - Continue looping while the user has not typed "n" to quit.

The while loop statement

- **`while` loop**: Executes as long as a condition is true.
  - well suited to writing indefinite loops

```
while (<condition>) {
    <statement(s)> ;
}
```



- Example:

```
int number = 1;
while (number <= 200) {
    System.out.print(number + " ");
    number = number * 2;
}
```

  - OUTPUT:

```
1 2 4 8 16 32 64 128
```

Example while loop

- Finds and prints a number's first factor other than 1:

```
Scanner console = new Scanner(System.in);
System.out.print("Type a number: ");
int number = console.nextInt();
int factor = 2;
while (number % factor != 0) {
    factor++;
}
System.out.println("First factor: " + factor);
```

- Example log of execution:

```
Type a number: 91
First factor: 7
```

While loop question

- Write code that repeatedly prompts until the user types a non-negative number, then computes its square root.
  - Example log of execution:

```
Type a non-negative integer: -5
Invalid number, try again: -1
Invalid number, try again: -235
Invalid number, try again: -87
Invalid number, try again: 121
The square root of 121 is 11.0
```

While loop answer

- Solution:

```
System.out.print("Type a non-negative integer: ");
int number = console.nextInt();

while (number < 0) {
    System.out.print("Invalid number, try again: ");
    number = console.nextInt();
}

System.out.println("The square root of " + number +
                   " is " + Math.sqrt(number));
```

- Notice that `number` has to be declared outside the loop.

Sentinel loops

reading: 5.1

Sentinel values

- **sentinel**: Special value that signals the end of user input.
- **sentinel loop**: Repeats until a sentinel value is seen.
  - Example: Write a program that repeatedly prompts the user for numbers to add until the user types 0, then outputs their sum.

    (In this case, 0 is our sentinel value.)

  - Example log of execution:

```
Enter a number (0 to quit): 95
Enter a number (0 to quit): 87
Enter a number (0 to quit): 42
Enter a number (0 to quit): 26
Enter a number (0 to quit): 0
The total is 250
```

Flawed sentinel solution

- What's wrong with this solution?

```
Scanner console = new Scanner(System.in);
int sum = 0;
int number = 1;   // "dummy value", anything but 0

while (number != 0) {
    System.out.print("Enter a number (0 to quit): ");
    number = console.nextInt();
    sum = sum + number;
}

System.out.println("The total is " + sum);
```

A different sentinel value

- Modify your program to use a sentinel value of **-1**.

  - Example log of execution:

```
Enter a number (-1 to quit): 95
Enter a number (-1 to quit): 87
Enter a number (-1 to quit): 42
Enter a number (-1 to quit): 26
Enter a number (-1 to quit): -1
The total is 250
```

Changing the sentinel value

- To see the problem, change the sentinel's value to -1:

```
Scanner console = new Scanner(System.in);
int sum = 0;
int number = 1;  // "dummy value", anything but -1

while (number != -1) {
    System.out.print("Enter a number (-1 to quit): ");
    number = console.nextInt();
    sum += number;
}

System.out.println("The total is " + sum);
```

- Now the solution produces the wrong output. Why?

```
The total was 249
```

The problem with our code

- Our code uses a pattern like this:

  sum = 0.
  while (input is not the sentinel) {
  prompt for input; read input.
  add input to the sum.
  }

- On the last pass, the sentinel -1 is added to the sum:

  prompt for input; read input (-1).
  add input (-1) to the sum.

- This is a fencepost problem.
  - We want to read *N* numbers, but only sum the first *N*-1 of them.

A fencepost solution

- We need the code to use a pattern like this:

```
sum = 0.
prompt for input; read input.          // place a "post"

while (input is not the sentinel) {
    add input to the sum.              // place a "wire"
    prompt for input; read input.      // place a "post"
}
```

- Sentinel loops often utilize a fencepost-style "loop-and-a-half" solution by pulling some code out of the loop.

Correct code

- This solution produces the correct output:

```
Scanner console = new Scanner(System.in);
int sum = 0;
System.out.print("Enter a number (-1 to quit): ");
int number = console.nextInt();

while (number != -1) {
    sum = sum + number;     // moved to top of loop
    System.out.print("Enter a number (-1 to quit): ");
    number = console.nextInt();
}

System.out.println("The total is " + sum);
```

Constant with sentinel

- A better solution creates a constant for the sentinel:

```
public static final int SENTINEL = -1;
```

- This solution uses the constant:

```
Scanner console = new Scanner(System.in);
int sum = 0;
System.out.print("Enter a number (" + SENTINEL + " to quit): ");
int number = console.nextInt();

while (number != SENTINEL) {
    sum = sum + number;

    System.out.print("Enter a number (" + SENTINEL + " to quit): ");
    number = console.nextInt();
}

System.out.println("The total is " + sum);
```