Block Structure Concepts

- Nested Visibility
  No access to identifiers outside their scope.
- Nearest Declaration Applies
  Static name scoping.
- Automatic Allocation and Deallocation of Locals
  Lifetime of data objects is bound to the scope of the Identifiers that denote them.

Variations in these rules of name scoping are possible.
For example, in Java, the lifetime of all class objects is from the time of their creation (via `new`) to the last visible reference to them.
Thus

```java
... Object o; ...
```
creates an object reference but does not allocate any memory space for `o`. You need

```java
... Object o = new Object(); ...
```
to actually create memory space for `o`.

Dynamic Scoping

An alternative to static scoping is dynamic scoping, which was used in early Lisp dialects (but not in Scheme, which is statically scoped).

Under dynamic scoping, identifiers are bound to the dynamically closest declaration of the identifier. Thus if an identifier is not locally declared, the call chain (sequence of callers) is examined to find a matching declaration.

Example:

```java
int x;
void print() {
    write(x); }
main () {
    bool x;
    print();
}
```
Under static scoping the `x` written in `print` is the lexically closest declaration of `x`, which is as an `int`. Under dynamic scoping, since `print` has no local declaration of `x`, `print`'s caller is examined. Since `main` calls `print`, and it has a declaration of `x` as a `bool`, that declaration is used.
Dynamic scoping makes type checking and variable access harder and more costly than static scoping. (Why?) However, dynamic scoping does allow a notion of an “extended scope” in which declarations extend to subprograms called within that scope. Though dynamic scoping may seem a bit bizarre, it is closely related to virtual functions used in C++ and Java.

Virtual Functions

A function declared in a class, C, may be redeclared in a class derived from C. Moreover, for uniformity of redeclaration, it is important that all calls, including those in methods within C, use the new declaration.

Example:

```java
class C {
    void DoIt() {PrintIt();}
    void PrintIt()
        {println("C rules!");}
}
class D extends C {
    void PrintIt()
        {println("D rules!");
    void TestIt() {DoIt();}
}
D dvar = new D();
dvar.TestIt();
D rules! is printed.
```

Scope vs. Lifetime

It is usually required that the lifetime of a run-time object at least cover the scope of the identifier. That is, whenever you can access an identifier, the run-time object it denotes better exist.

But, it is possible to have a run-time object’s lifetime exceed the scope of its identifier. An example of this is static or own variables.

In C:

```c
void p() {
    static int i = 0;
    print(i++);
}
```

Each call to `p` prints a different value of `i` (0, 1, ...) Variable `i` retains its value across calls.

Some languages allow an explicit binding of an identifier for a fixed scope:

Let

```c
id = val in statements end;
```

A declaration may appear wherever a statement or expression is allowed. Limited scopes enhance readability.
**Structs vs. Blocks**

Many programming languages, including C, C++, C#, Pascal and Ada, have a notion of grouping data together into structs or records. For example:

```c
struct complex { float re, im; }
```

There is also the notion of grouping statements and declarations into blocks:

```c
{ float re, im;
  re = 0.0; im = 1.0;
}
```

Blocks and structs look similar, but there are significant differences:

**Structs are data,**
- As originally designed, structs contain only data (no functions or methods).
- Structs can be dynamically created, in any number, and included in other data structures (e.g., in an array of structs).
- All fields in a struct are visible outside the struct.

**Classes**

- Class objects can be created as needed, in any number, and included in other data structure.
- They include both data (fields) and functions (methods).
- They include mechanisms to initialize themselves (constructors) and to finalize themselves (destructors).
- They allow controlled access to members (private and public declarations).
Type Equivalence in Classes

In C, C++ and Java, instances of the same struct or class are type-equivalent, and mutually assignable. For example:

class MyClass { ... }
MyClass v1, v2;
v1 = v2; // Assignment is OK

We expect to be able to assign values of the same type, including class objects.
However, sometimes a class models a data object whose size or shape is set upon creation (in a constructor). Then we may not want assignment to be allowed.

class Point {
    int dimensions;
    float coordinates[];
    Point () {
        dimensions = 2;
        coordinates = new float[2];
    }
    Point (int d) {
        dimensions = d;
        coordinates = new float[d];
    }
}
Point plane = new Point();
Point solid = new Point(3);
plane = solid; //OK in Java

This assignment is allowed, even though the two objects represent points in different dimensions.

Subtypes

In C++, C# and Java we can create subclasses—new classes derived from an existing class.
We can use subclasses to create new data objects that are similar (since they are based on a common parent), but still type-inequivalent.
Example:

class Point2 extends Point {
    Point2() {super(2); }
}
class Point3 extends Point {
    Point3() {super(3); }
}
Point2 plane = new Point2();
Point3 solid = new Point3();
plane = solid; //Illegal in Java

Parametric Polymorphism

We can create distinct subclasses based on the values passed to constructors. But sometimes we want to create subclasses based on distinct types, and types can’t be passed as parameters. (Types are not values, but rather a property of values.)

We see this problem in Java, which tries to create general purpose data structures by basing them on the class Object. Since any object can be assigned to Object (all classes must be a subclass of Object), this works—at least partially.
class LinkedList {
  Object value;
  LinkedList next;
  Object head() {return value;}
  LinkedList tail() {return next;}
  LinkedList(Object O) {
    value = O; next = null;
  }
  LinkedList(Object O, LinkedList L) {
    value = O; next = L;
  }
}

Using this class, we can create a linked list of any subtype of Object.

But, we can't guarantee that linked lists are type homogeneous (contain only a single type).

We must cast Object types back into their "real" types when we extract list values.

. We must use wrapper classes like Integer rather than int (because primitive types like int aren't objects, and aren't subclass of Object).

For example, to use LinkedList to build a linked list of ints we do the following:

```java
LinkedList l = new LinkedList(new Integer(123));
int i = ((Integer) l.head()).intValue();
```

This is pretty clumsy code. We'd prefer a mechanism that allows us to create a "custom version" of LinkedList, based on the type we want the list to contain.

We can't just call something like LinkedList(int) or LinkedList(Integer) because types can't be passed as parameters.

Parametric polymorphism is the solution. Using this mechanism, we can use type parameters to build a "custom version" of a class from a general purpose class.

C++ allows this using its template mechanism. Tiger Java, the newest version of Java, also allows type parameters.

In both languages, type parameters are enclosed in "angle brackets" (e.g., LinkedList<T> passes T, a type, to the LinkedList class).

Thus we have

```java
class LinkedList<T> {
  T value; LinkedList<T> next;
  T head() {return value;}
  LinkedList<T> tail() {
    return next;
  }
  LinkedList(T O) {
    value = O; next = null;
  }
  LinkedList(T O, LinkedList<T> L) {
    value = O; next = L;
  }
}
LinkedList<Integer> l = new LinkedList<Integer>(123);
int i = l.head();
```