Data Member Encyclopedia Article

Data Member

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Data Member

A **data** member, also known as an instance **variable**, is a component of an **object**. Objects are miniature programs that consist of both **code** and data. It is these data items that are referred to as data members.

A data member is not accessible directly via the object. Rather, **access** is through the use of what is termed a **member function**. A member **function** is the code component of the object.

The qualities of an object can be divided into two categories—form, and behavior. The form of a **class** of objects comprises the qualities that separate objects in a certain class from objects in another class. In the **Java programming** language, the data members specify the form of an object. In other words, in a given class, the data members of the constituent objects represent those qualities that are common to the objects in that class.

Each data member has an **identifier**. The identifier is the name of the data member, expressed as a unique combination of letters, digits, and underscore characters. An identifier always begins with a letter.