Parent Encyclopedia Article

Parent

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The parent, or mother or predecessor as it is often called, is a term that refers to the more general element in a relationship that is formulated in a generalization-type architecture or hierarchical structure. In this type of architecture things associated with child, a more specialized element, are substitutable for a parent of that child. Often times it is common to say "the child is a kind of the parent." The parent is the **object** or element that is immediately above another object in a hierarchical structure. It can also be an object or element that contains other objects or elements.

This kind of generalization architecture is often found in organizational trees of classes of elements, **databases**, and directory file structure in some **computer languages**. In **Unix** files are organized into directories that contain files and other directories. This type of file structure looks similar to a **tree** with its different branches. It is a directed acyclic graph, that is a graph that has only a single route between any pair of nodes. The top of a tree file structure is called the root **node**. Each entry on a different branch is a node and considered a **child node**, or daughter node, of the parent branch. Each parent branch is, in turn, considered a child node of the next higher parent branch closer to the root node to which it falls under. No node can have more than one parent. If a node has no parents but does have child nodes then it is called a root node. A superclass is a parent of another **class** within that generalization, and a supertype is a patent of another class within a generalization.