

Jonathan Harbour

Sams **Teach Yourself**

Android

Game Programming

in **24**
Hours

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Jonathan Harbour

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Android

Game Programming

in **24**
Hours

SAMS

800 East 96th Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46240 USA

Sams Teach Yourself Android Game Programming in 24 Hours

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Contents at a Glance

Introduction	xvii
--------------------	------

Part I: Introduction

HOURL 1 Introducing Android 4	3
2 Installing the Development Tools	15
3 Configuring NetBeans and Eclipse with the Android SDK	31
4 Creating Your First Android Program	47

Part II: Android Hardware

HOURL 5 Getting Started with Graphics	77
6 Drawing Basic Shapes and Text	93
7 Loading and Drawing Images	111
8 Bringing Your Game to Life with Looping	129
9 Multi-Touch User Input	143
10 Using the Accelerometer	157
11 Using the Linear Acceleration and Proximity Sensors	169
12 Using the Gravity and Pressure Sensors	181
13 Creating Your Own “Tricorder”	191
14 Playing with the Audio System	213

Part III: Android Gameplay

HOURL 15 Building an Android Game Engine	225
16 Creating a Sprite/Actor Class	255
17 Frame Animation Using a Sprite Sheet/Atlas	269
18 Advanced Multi-Animation Techniques	281
19 Manipulating Sprites with Matrix Transforms	299
20 Entity Grouping	321
21 Collision Detection	333

22	Using Linear Velocity for Realistic Movement.....	349
22	Scrolling the Background.....	371
22	Ball and Paddle Game.....	385
	Index.....	397

Table of Contents

Introduction	xvii
--------------------	------

Part I: Introduction

HOOR 1: Introducing Android 4	3
Hello, Android 4	3
About the Android SDK	7
About the Android NDK	8
Android Dev System Requirements	8
History of the Platform	9
Android Hardware Specifications	11
Summary	13
Q&A	13
Workshop	14
 HOOR 2: Installing the Development Tools	 15
Installing the JDK	16
Downloading the NetBeans Package	17
Installing the Package	17
Installing the Android SDK	19
Downloading the SDK	20
Installing the SDK	20
Running the Android SDK Manager	23
Installing the ADT Plug-in for Eclipse	25
Summary	28
Q&A	29
Workshop	29

HOURL 3: Configuring NetBeans and Eclipse with the Android SDK	31
Creating an Android Emulator Device	31
Plugging Android SDK into NetBeans	35
Adding Android SDK Support to Eclipse	40
Summary	45
Q&A	46
Workshop	46
Hour 4: Creating Your First Android Program	47
Creating a New Android Project	47
Building the New Project	52
Editing the “Hello, Android!” Program	60
Comparing the Emulator to an Android Device	63
Summary	72
Q&A	72
Workshop	72
 Part II: Android Hardware	
HOURL 5: Getting Started with Graphics	77
Understanding the Activity Class	77
Testing the Activity States	79
World’s Simplest Android Graphics Demo	86
Summary	90
Q&A	91
Workshop	91
HOURL 6: Drawing Basic Shapes and Text	93
Drawing Basic Vector Shapes	93
Drawing Text	99
Writing Code for Javadoc	103
Android Screen Densities and Resolutions	104
Summary	109
Q&A	110
Workshop	110

HOURL 7: Loading and Drawing Images	111
Double-Buffered Drawing	111
Loading a Bitmap File	115
Drawing a Bitmap	120
Summary	126
Q&A	126
Workshop	127
HOURL 8: Bringing Your Game to Life with Looping	129
Creating a Threaded Game Loop	129
Drawing Without <code>onDraw()</code>	132
The Runnable Animation Demo	134
Summary	140
Q&A	141
Workshop	141
HOURL 9: Multi-Touch User Input	143
Single-Touch Input	143
Multi-Touch Input	148
Summary	155
Q&A	155
Workshop	156
HOURL 10: Using the Accelerometer	157
Android Sensors	157
Summary	168
Q&A	168
Workshop	168
HOURL 11: Using the Linear Acceleration and Proximity Sensors	169
Accessing the Linear Acceleration Sensor	169
Accessing the Proximity Sensor	177
Summary	178
Q&A	178
Workshop	178

HOURL 12: Using the Gravity and Pressure Sensors	181
Using the Gravity Sensor	181
Using the Pressure Sensor	188
Summary	189
Q&A	190
Workshop	190
HOURL 13: Creating Your Own “Tricorder”	191
Encapsulating the Android Sensors	191
Creating the Tricorder Project	195
Summary	211
Q&A	211
Workshop	211
HOURL 14: Playing with the Audio System	213
Playing Audio Using MediaPlayer	213
Playing Audio Using SoundPool	218
Summary	221
Q&A	221
Workshop	221
Part III: Android Gameplay	
HOURL 15: Building an Android Game Engine	225
Designing an Android Game Engine	226
Creating an Android Library Project	229
Writing the Core Engine Classes	234
Engine Test Demo Project	247
Summary	253
Q&A	253
Workshop	254
HOURL 16: Creating a Sprite/Actor Class	255
Static Sprite as a “Prop”	255
Dynamic Sprite as an “Actor”	257
Encapsulating Basic Sprite Functionality	258

Testing the Sprite Class	261
Summary	266
Q&A	266
Workshop	267
HOOR 17: Frame Animation Using a Sprite Sheet/Atlas	269
Animating with a Single Strip	269
Animating with a Sprite Sheet (Texture Atlas)	272
The Animation Demo	273
Summary	278
Q&A	279
Workshop	279
HOOR 18: Advanced Multi-Animation Techniques	281
Creating an Animation System	281
Animation System Demo	293
Summary	297
Q&A	297
Workshop	298
HOOR 19: Manipulating Sprites with Matrix Transforms	299
Matrix Translation	299
Matrix Rotation	305
Matrix Scaling	306
Matrix Transforms Demo	307
Summary	319
Q&A	320
Workshop	320
HOOR 20: Entity Grouping	321
Entity Grouping	321
Summary	332
Q&A	332
Workshop	332

Hour 21: Collision Detection	333
Collision Detection Techniques	333
Demonstrating Collisions	337
Summary	347
Q&A	348
Workshop	348
Hour 22: Using Linear Velocity for Realistic Movement	349
Calculating Velocity from a Direction	349
“Pointing” a Sprite in the Direction of Movement	352
Enhancing the Engine	355
Summary	368
Q&A	369
Workshop	369
Hour 23: Scrolling the Background	371
Background Scrolling Overview	371
The <i>Shoot-’Em-Up</i> Game	374
Summary	382
Q&A	382
Workshop	382
Hour 24: Ball and Paddle Game	385
Creating the Ball and Paddle Game	385
Summary	394
Q&A	395
Workshop	395
Index	397

Foreword

When Jonathan Harbour asked me to write the foreword to this book, I was quite honored. I first met Jon when I started teaching game design at the University of Advancing Technology in Tempe, Arizona. As a novice teacher, I was very grateful to Jon for offering his advice and assistance. Because he taught game programming and I taught game design, it was natural that we would work together.

We also hit it off simply as gamers. We both love strategy games, and we found that we are both huge board wargame fans. We especially enjoyed a WWII battle game called *Memoir '44*, but our most intense confrontations were in *Twilight Struggle*, a game covering the entire Cold War period in an innovative card-driven format.

We soon discovered that we also shared similar philosophies about teaching and game development—that game development is hard work, and to prepare our students for careers in the game industry requires that we challenge them and hold them to the highest standards. So when Jon asked me to work with him and a team of students on a small XNA game project, I jumped at the opportunity! We assembled a strong team and spent some time getting to know each other in order to understand our collective skills and strengths.

After a period of brainstorming, research, and concept development we chose to do a 2D side-scrolling platformer, but not just another run-of-the-mill platformer! We really wanted to have some fun, but we also wanted to see if we could find a way to innovate a little. The game we ended up making was *Aquaphobia: Mutant Brain Sponge Madness*. As the game developed, we found that we were attracting a lot of attention at the school. People were charmed by the main character, the setting, and the overall art style—and the basic gameplay was undeniably fun! UAT honored us with a sponsorship to the Game Developer's Conference (GDC) Austin that summer.

Our follow-up was a more ambitious project. We proposed and received approval to merge Jon's mobile game programming course with my handheld game design course and to have all of the students in both classes work together on a single project. We would make a game for the Nintendo DS, and the concept we pitched was a straightforward translation of the popular board game *Memoir '44*. The project didn't pan out for a variety of reasons, but as any teacher will assure you, you learn more from your mistakes than you do from your successes! I think our students learned a LOT from that experience, and I know that Jon and I both did!

The bottom line is this: Jonathan Harbour is deeply passionate about making games. He also loves teaching. The book you hold will help you learn to make games, too. Enjoy!

David Wessman

Game Designer

About the Author

Jonathan Harbour is a writer and instructor whose love for computers and video games dates back to the Commodore PET and Atari 2600 era. He has a Master's in Information Systems Management. His portfolio site at www.jharbour.com includes a discussion forum. He also authored *Sams Teach Yourself Windows Phone 7 Game Programming in 24 Hours*. His love of science fiction led to the remake of a beloved classic video game with some friends, resulting in *Starflight—The Lost Colony* (www.starflightgame.com).

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my friend and colleague, David Wessman. I enjoyed working with David as a fellow instructor at UAT during 2009-2010. Among his many game credits is *TIE Fighter* (LucasArts).

Acknowledgments

This book was a challenging project because of the quickly evolving Android platform. I am thankful to the production team at Pearson for their patience during the long writing process (including missed deadlines) and hard work to get it into print. Neil Rowe; Mark Renfrow; Barbara Hacha; Elaine Wiley; and technical reviewer, Chris Bossardet.

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As the reader of this book, you are our most important critic and commentator. We value your opinion and want to know what we're doing right, what we could do better, what areas you'd like to see us publish in, and any other words of wisdom you're willing to pass our way.

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Introduction

Since Google acquired Android, Inc., to compete with Apple and Microsoft in the smartphone and tablet markets, competition has heated up in this lucrative market. These are two tough competitors, but Android quickly gained a strong market share in a short time, with Google celebrating its 500 millionth Android OS sale. (Although Android is a license-free OS, devices are still registered with Google—at no cost). Both Apple and Microsoft have invested *billions* to develop and market their proprietary platforms, whereas Google has taken the open standards approach of releasing the source code to Android (which is based on the Linux core). This has allowed smartphone and tablet manufacturers to customize the OS for their devices while maintaining “app” compatibility across the line. Android literally is comparable to Apple’s iOS devices in quality and performance, with an equally impressive online shop for purchasing music, books, movies, and apps: Google Play.

Android 4 was an especially important update to the OS, which seems to have been such a big hit that hardware manufacturers are largely leaving it alone—the stock OS—rather than customizing it for their devices. In the past, companies like Toshiba and Samsung have released custom versions that gave their devices a unique look and feel. But that practice is in decline as the OS gained notoriety and branding. An exclusion today is Amazon’s Kindle Fire HD, which runs the Android 4 OS with many custom Amazon apps to give the device a uniqueness that leverages the equally impressive Kindle Fire brand.

This book is about writing games for the Android 4 mobile operating system used in smartphones and tablets. The ideal reader for this book is a programmer who knows Java and has already dabbled in game programming before, and who needs a primer for the Android platform. This book is not extremely advanced; the reader level is beginning to intermediate, with absolutely no 3D covered (via OpenGL ES 2.0). An entire book is needed to cover OpenGL ES properly, and our goal with this book is to introduce the most important concepts in developing games for Android 4, not to address high-performance rendering. However, this book *will* take you right up to the point where you will be able to look into OpenGL ES. You will gain a solid understanding of the Android hardware, including the display system, audio system, sensors, and touch screen. A sample game engine is demonstrated in the final hours.

The Android SDK is based on the Java language, so this book's code revolves around Java. The SDK and development tools are free to download and install, and this book explains step by step how to do so, making it suitable for a beginner. The approach taken is that the reader is a knowledgeable person, with some experience at programming already, and is looking for a quick head-start to developing games on the Android platform. The book moves along at a leisurely pace, not getting too technical right away, simply showing the reader how everything works in a step-by-step fashion—in other words, how to get an Android game up and running fairly quickly. The Android SDK is a challenge to set up and use for a complete novice, so we cover every detail on getting started with the tools. Although a reader will greatly benefit from having at least some experience with the Java language, we do not make the assumption and will explain the code for each example. Then, after the basic hurdles are overcome, the latter half of the book delves into some serious gameplay code at a higher level.

In Part I, covering Hours 1–4, you learn how to install and configure the development tools and the Android SDK.

In Part II, covering Hours 5–14, you learn all about the Android OS and how to use the Android devices supported by the SDK, such as the graphics system, touch screen, audio system, and sensors (such as the accelerometer).

In Part III, covering Hours 15–24, you learn how to create a basic game engine for the Android platform with helper classes covering the common gameplay features needed to program most video games, such as sprites and a customizable animation system. The last two hours present game examples to demonstrate the concepts.

To download the source code for this book (as an Eclipse workspace), see the author's website at <http://jharbour.com> or the publisher's website at <http://www.informit.com/store/product.aspx?isbn=0672336049>.

HOUR 3

Configuring NetBeans and Eclipse with the Android SDK

What You'll Learn in This Hour:

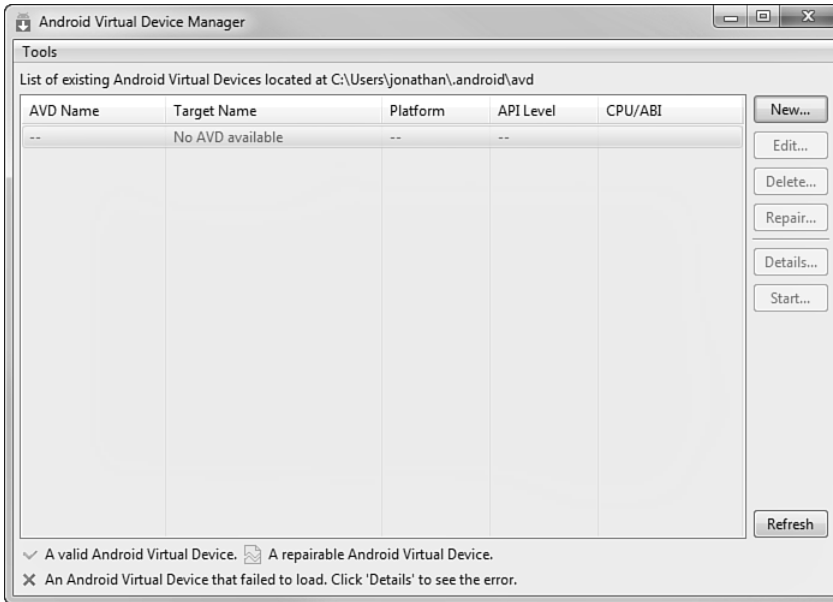
- ▶ Creating an Android emulator device
- ▶ Running the emulator
- ▶ Adding the Android plug-in to NetBeans
- ▶ Adding the Android plug-in to Eclipse

This hour covers additional prerequisites needed to use the Android SDK with an IDE. We're taking this in small steps now with plenty of figure examples to act as a quick reference for your Android programming projects to come. In this hour, you learn how to use the Android Virtual Device Manager to set up the emulator to run your Android programs. Then you learn how to add the Android SDK to NetBeans and Eclipse. The SDK was already installed in Hour 2, "Installing the Development Tools," so if you skipped that step, you will need to go back and install it.

Creating an Android Emulator Device

If you think that there are a lot of steps required just to get up and running with Android, you would be right! But we're on the right track and almost done with all of the prerequisites. Soon we will be writing game code. First, what you need to do is configure an Android emulator. An emulator is called Android Virtual Device, or AVD. You must use the Android Virtual Device Manager, shown in Figure 3.1, to create an emulator device.

The reason for needing an emulation *manager* is because of all the Android OS versions that have come out so quickly, in just the past three years. Also, developers might need to test their programs on more than one version of the Android OS to ensure that they work correctly.

**FIGURE 3.1**

The Android Virtual Device Manager is used to set up the Android emulator.

Creating a New Emulator Device

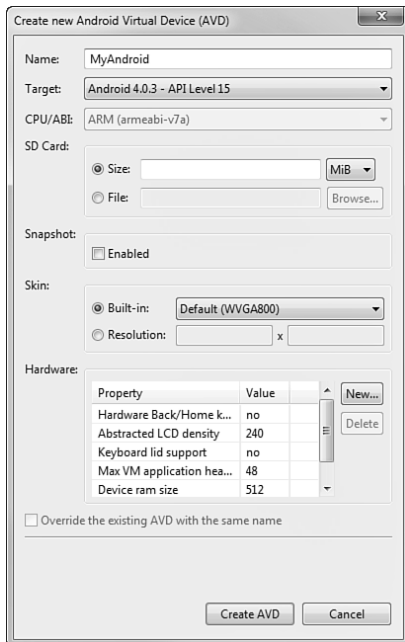
First, we'll create an emulator device. Click the New button on the right side of the AVD Manager. This brings up the dialog shown in Figure 3.2, Create New Android Virtual Device (AVD). If AVD Manager is not running, you can find it in Program Files under Android SDK Tools.

As you can see, a lot of options exist for the emulator! First, we'll focus on the Target field, which has a drop-down list of Android OS targets. This list will be quite small if you installed only 4.0 or 4.1 (using the Android SDK Manager in the previous hour). If multiple SDKs are installed, you will be able to choose the version you want to emulate.

Give your new emulator device a name, such as MyAndroid (or a descriptive name related to the settings chosen).

Choose the target for Android 4. It might say 4.0.3 or 4.1 or some other revision, depending on the specific version you installed on your dev PC.

The CPU/ABI field should be grayed out for Android 4 because devices use a standard CPU. If, for any reason, this field is not grayed out (for instance, if you are targeting API 14 or earlier), be sure to set it to ARM. Again, this shouldn't be necessary if you're using the latest version of the API.

**FIGURE 3.2**

Creating a new emulator—Android Virtual Device.

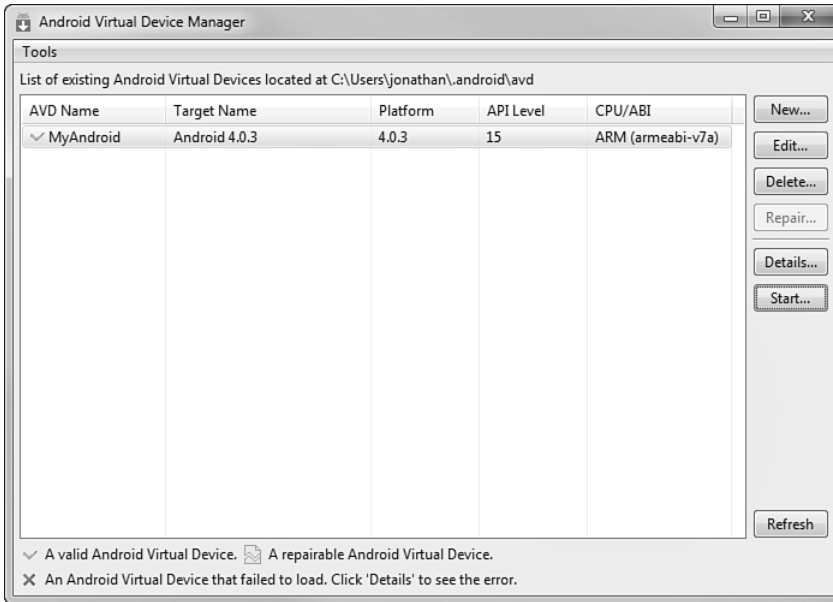
If you want to simulate an SD Card in the emulator, you can specify the size of the SD Card.

The display setting is a challenge because there are so many options. It's probably safe to go with WVGA800, although there are others. This will differ quite significantly depending on the hardware you want to emulate. For instance, if you want to emulate a specific smartphone model, you would look up the screen resolution for that phone. But if you want to emulate a tablet, it will likely have a different screen. This allows you to create more than one emulator device for these various possibilities in the hardware.

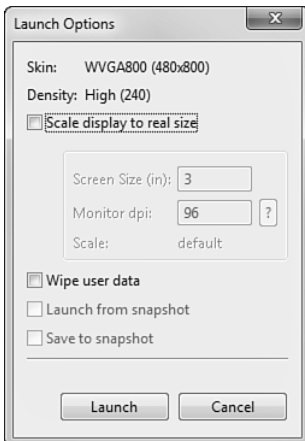
Figure 3.3 shows the AVD Manager with the new device added to the list. An emulator device called MyAndroid has been added. If you want to quickly peruse the settings for any device, double-click the device in the list to bring up a mini detail dialog.

Running the Emulator

Choose your emulator device in the list and click the Start button on the right. This brings up the mini launch dialog shown in Figure 3.4. You can tweak a few options if desired and then click the Launch button.

**FIGURE 3.3**

A new Android Virtual Device has been added.

**FIGURE 3.4**

Preparing to launch the emulator.

The emulator device is shown in Figure 3.5, running Android OS 4.0. It may take a few minutes for the emulator to bring up the home screen shown here. The emulator must install the OS and

then run it. Because this is rather time consuming, you will want to keep the emulator open while writing Android code so it's available anytime you build and run your code.



FIGURE 3.5
The Android OS 4.0 emulator is running.

Plugging Android SDK into NetBeans

Although the Android SDK has been installed, NetBeans doesn't automatically know about it, so we have to configure NetBeans to recognize Android projects. This is done with a special plug-in. We'll go over the configuration step by step with plenty of screenshots so you can refer to this hour if needed.

The plug-in has to be downloaded from within NetBeans and is available from a file repository at kenai.com. The plug-in is called NBAndroid, which is short for “NetBeans Android.”

First, open the Tools menu in NetBeans, as shown in Figure 3.6, and choose the Plug-ins menu option.

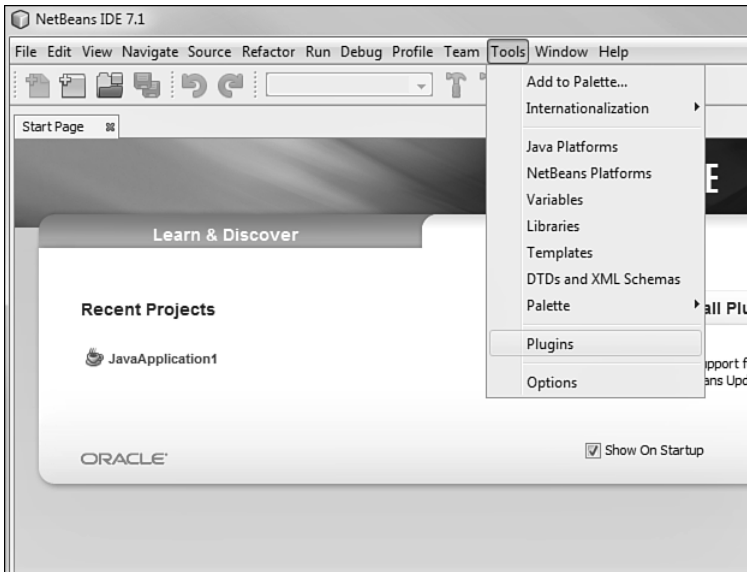


FIGURE 3.6

Invoking the Plug-ins dialog using the Tools menu.

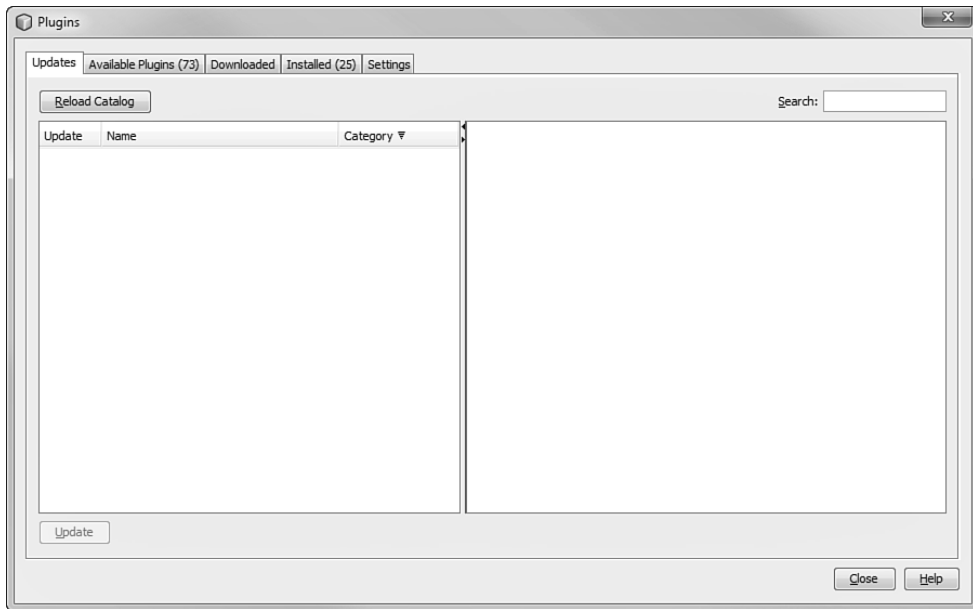
If this is a new install of NetBeans, you likely will not have any additional plug-ins installed yet (as expected). The Plug-ins dialog is shown in Figure 3.7. This first tab shows only updates and is normally empty.

Open the Settings tab, shown in Figure 3.8. Three update centers will be listed (or more, if you are using a more recent version than NetBeans 7.1). The options are not important, but just for reference: Certified Plug-ins, NetBeans Distribution, and Plug-in Portal. We will be adding our own new plug-in source.

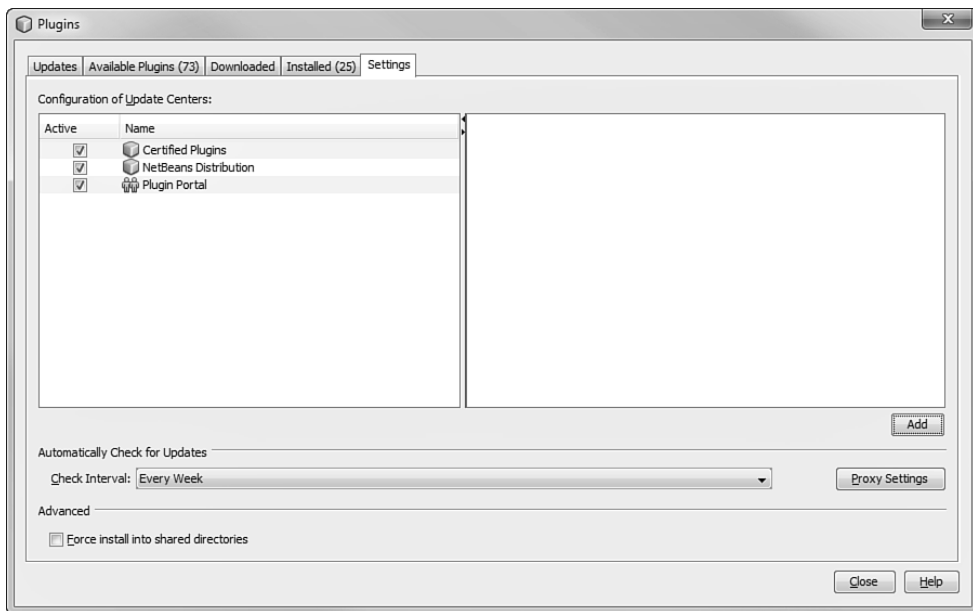
On the right side is a button labeled Add. Use this button to bring up the Update Center Customizer dialog (see Figure 3.9). This dialog has two fields where you can specify a new source for plug-ins.

In the Name field, enter **kenai.com**. In the URL field, enter this URL: **<http://kenai.com/downloads/nbandroid/updatecenter/updates.xml>**.

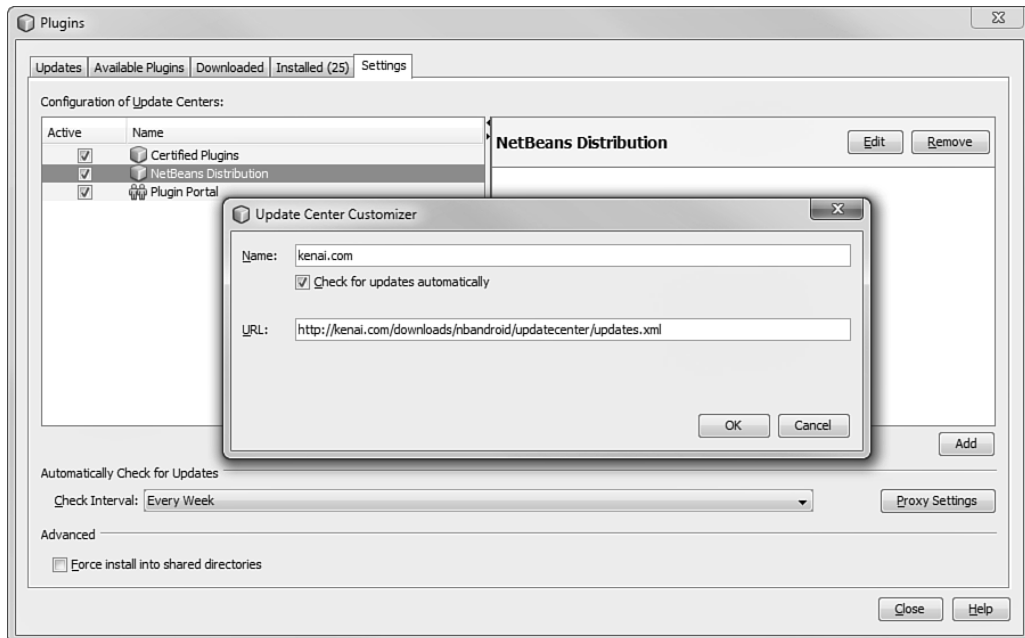
Click the OK button to proceed.

**FIGURE 3.7**

The Plug-ins dialog has several tabs.

**FIGURE 3.8**

Viewing the list of plug-in sources.

**FIGURE 3.9**

Adding a new plug-in source (kenai.com).

BY THE WAY

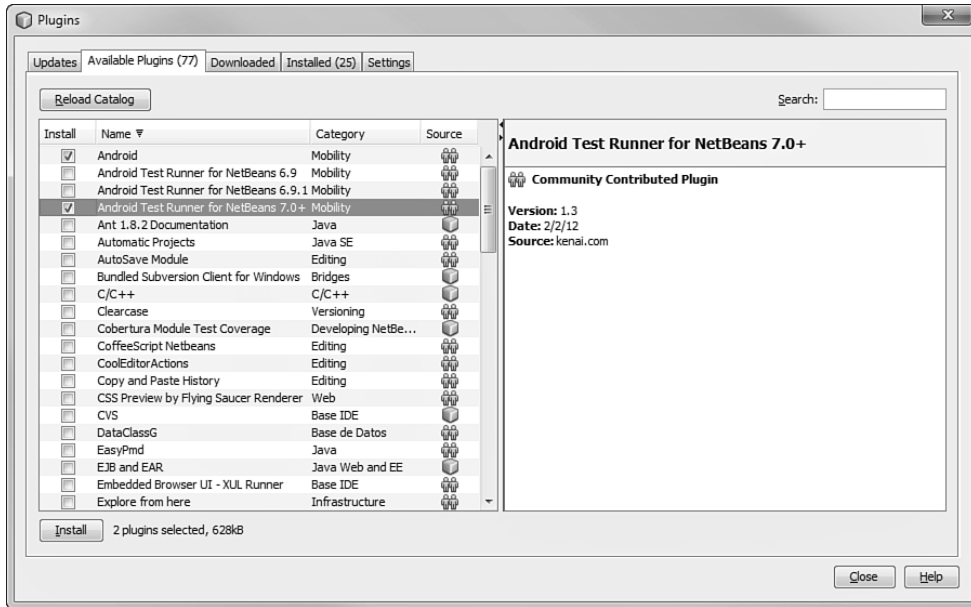
Remember that URLs tend to change without notice! Your best friend is a search engine: Try searching Google for “netbeans android sdk” and you should find the latest tools and plug-ins.

NetBeans then parses the URL specified for any available NetBeans plug-ins. Nothing more will come up—just switch over to the Available Plug-ins tab. The Android plug-ins appear at the top of the list (see Figure 3.10). If the list is not sorted alphabetically, click the Name field heading to sort by Name.

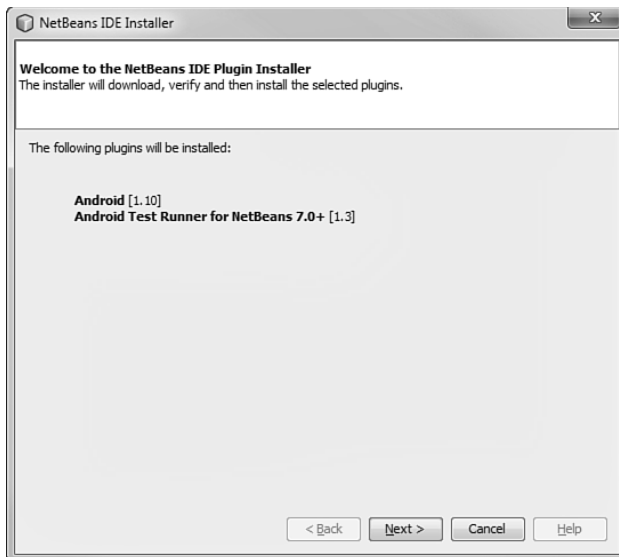
The only plug-in really needed is Android. Two have been selected in Figure 3.11, but the Android Test Runner plug-in is not essential—usually it’s for testing larger applications. You may skip it if you like.

Check the Android plug-in and then click the Install button at the bottom left.

A confirmation window will come up showing all the plug-ins you have selected to install. Click Next.

**FIGURE 3.10**

The list of Available Plug-ins (from all sources).

**FIGURE 3.11**

Preparing to install the Android plug-in for NetBeans.

The new NBAndroid plug-in will be installed. When complete, go to the Installed tab to verify the installation of the new plug-in. See Figure 3.12.

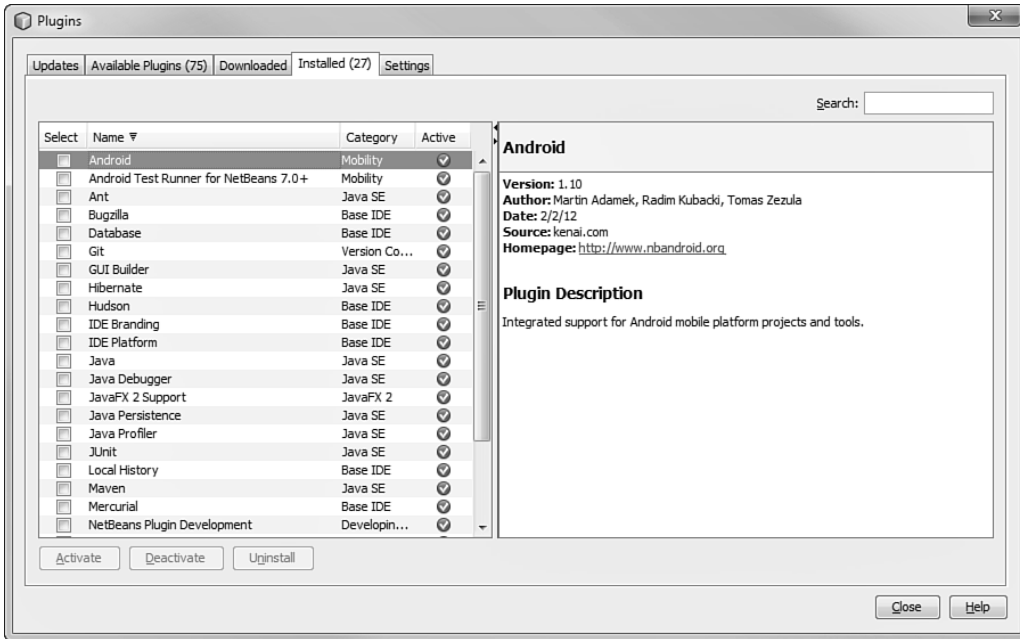


FIGURE 3.12

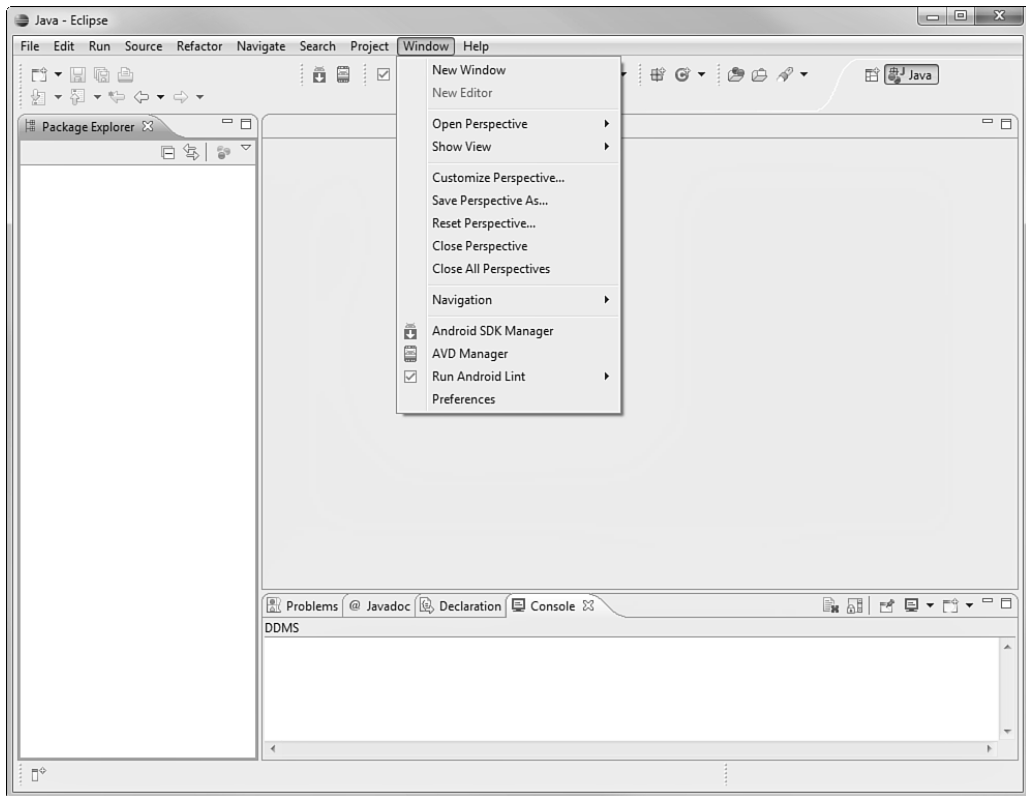
The Android plug-in now appears in the Installed list.

Adding Android SDK Support to Eclipse

The Android SDK plugs into Eclipse a little easier than it does with NetBeans because only one install is required (and no separate plug-in like *NBAndroid* is needed). In the previous hour is a tutorial on installing the Android Development Kit and the Eclipse plug-in, so you may want to refer to Hour 2 if you haven't yet installed these packages. Assuming you have them installed, Eclipse is ready to go. In that case, the title of this section is a misnomer because the Android SDK does not need to be added—it's already good to go. Let's take a look.

Creating a New Android Project in Eclipse

If you finished installing the files in the previous hour, verify the install in Eclipse by opening the Window menu, shown in Figure 3.13. You should see Android SDK Manager and AVD Manager to verify that Eclipse recognizes the new Android packages.

**FIGURE 3.13**

The Window menu in Eclipse shows the Android SDK tools.

Now, open the File menu and choose New, Project. You should see a new Android group, as shown in Figure 3.14. Choose Android Project from the options shown and click Next.

The New Android Project dialog appears next, as shown in Figure 3.15. Enter a name for the project and choose either the default location or enter a new location for the project files.

The next dialog, shown in Figure 3.16, allows you to choose the Android SDK target (because multiple Android SDK versions may be installed to support various OS release levels). In the example shown, Android 4.0.3 was automatically checked. If you have more than one SDK installed, you may choose from among them.

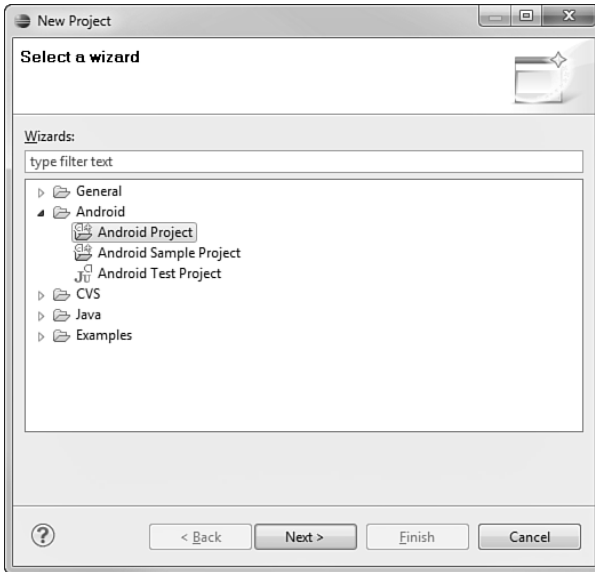


FIGURE 3.14
Creating a new Android project in Eclipse using the New Project dialog.

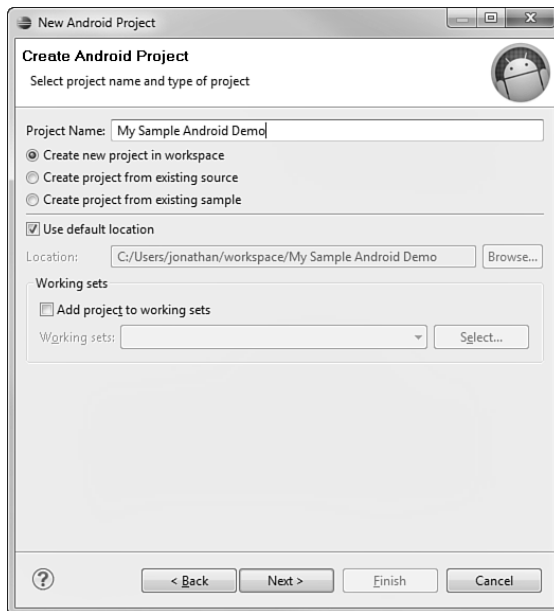


FIGURE 3.15
Entering the new project details.

**FIGURE 3.16**

Verifying the Build Target for the new project.

The next dialog that comes up in the New Android Project Wizard, shown in Figure 3.17, will look familiar because you dealt with this information earlier in the NetBeans project: the Package Name and Activity. These will make a little more sense in the next hour when you see the names in the source code. For now, you may change the values as needed. Because this is only a configuration tutorial and you aren't writing any real Android code just yet, the values are not that important. But, as was the case with NetBeans, you must enter at least two words separated by a period into the Package Name field.

There are a *lot* of files created for a new project. Take a look at Figure 3.18, which shows the newly created project. In Package Explorer (on the left side of the IDE) you will see a folder called `src`, and then `my.project` (the package name), which contains the source code file called `MySampleAndroidDemoActivity.java`. This is similar to the files in the NetBeans project.

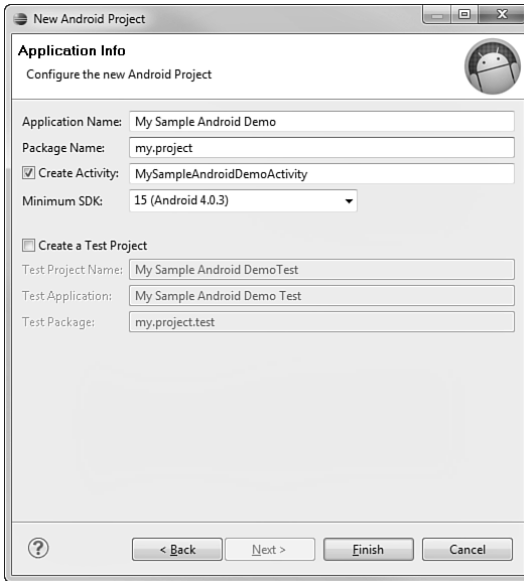


FIGURE 3.17
Entering the Application Info fields.

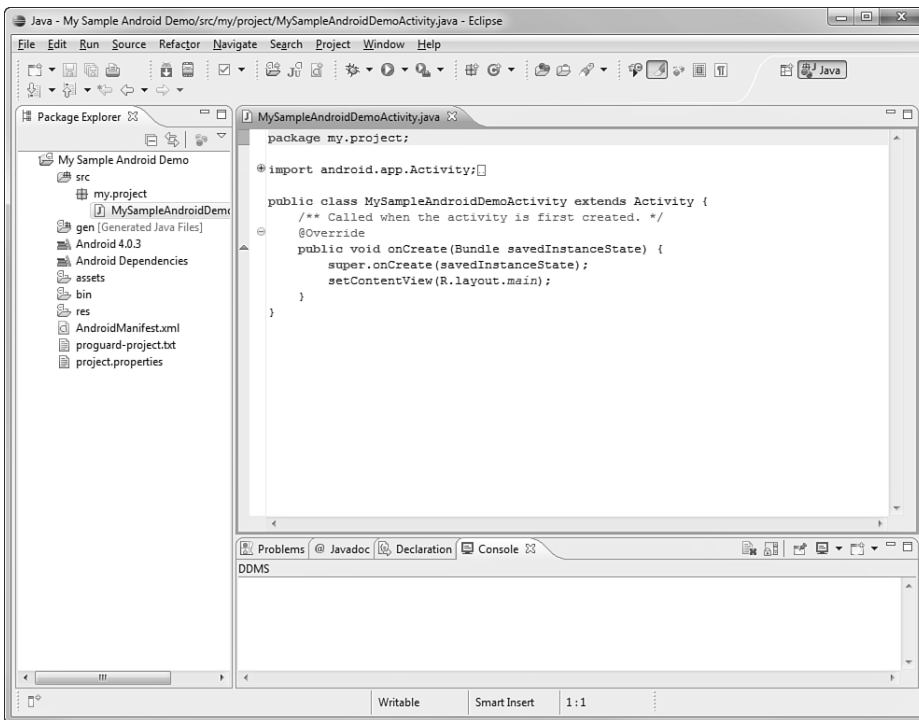


FIGURE 3.18
The new Android project has been created.

Choosing an Android Build Target

To build and run an Android project in Eclipse, open up the Window menu and choose Preferences. This brings up a dialog called Preferences, shown in Figure 3.19. In the list of preference groups, choose Android to show the Android preferences. Use the Browse button to choose the Android SDK location. This may be in `C:\Program Files\Android`, or it may be in My Documents, or elsewhere—it depends on where you chose to install the SDK according to the steps. Next, choose the target from the list (Android 4.0.3 in this case).

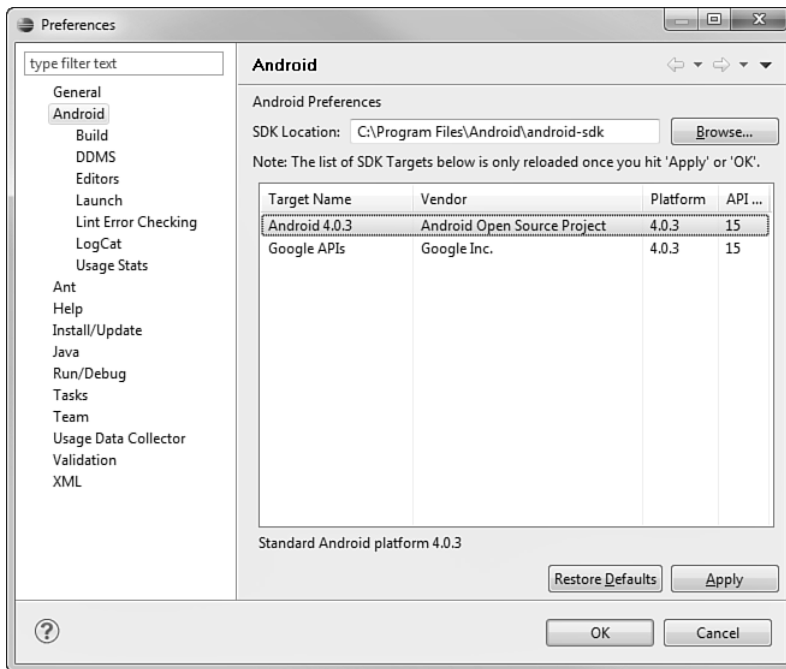


FIGURE 3.19

Setting the Android SDK location and choosing the Android build target.

Summary

This hour covered the additional steps needed to get started programming with the Android SDK using both NetBeans and Eclipse. By now you will have created an emulator device and installed the Android plug-ins for NetBeans and Eclipse and are ready to begin writing code! You write your first real Android project in the next hour.

Q&A

- Q.** How do you think Java compares to other languages frequently used for game programming, such as C++ and C#?
- A.** Answers will vary.
- Q.** If the Android SDK is the library for making apps and games on the Android platform, how does it compare with the DirectX SDK for Windows? You may need to search online for information in order to discuss this topic.
- A.** Answers will vary.

Workshop

Quiz

1. What is the technical name for the Android emulator?
2. Which version of the Android OS does the emulator support?
3. Which IDE uses the NBAndroid plug-in?

Answers

1. Android Virtual Device (AVD)
2. All versions (that have been installed).
3. NetBeans

Activities

- The Android SDK includes libraries written in Java that interface with a lower-level interface written in C++. It is possible to write C++ code and compile it to run on Android, with Java as a bridge. What is this C++ library called, and how does it work? You may need to do a cursory search online for “android C++ library.”

Index

Symbols

/-Enter** (Javadoc comments),
103-104

2D from 3D coordinates, gravity
sensors, converting, 183

3D rendering, Android NDK
support, 8

3D to 2D coordinates, gravity
sensors, converting, 183

A

ABD (Android Debug Bridge)

installing, 65-68

running code, 69-71

versus USB device driver,
65-68

AC3 (FFmpeg) audio format, 217

Accelerometer Demo, 164-167

accelerometer sensors, 157-158,
193, 209

accelMotion variable, 162

disabling screen orientation
changes, 159-160

initializing, 160-161

versus linear acceleration,
169

movement of, 161-162

Activity class

base application class, 78

methods, 78

overridable, 78

setTitle(), 78

addAnimation() method, Sprite
class, 287

addToGroup() method, Engine
class, 324, 392

adjustAlpha() method, Animation
class, 282

adjustPosition() method,
Animation class, 282

adjustRotation() method,
Animation class, 282

adjustScale() method, Animation
class, 282

ADT (Android Development Tools)
plug-in

Android “wizard” dialog, 80

installing, 25-28

AIFF (Apple) signed 16-bit PCM
audio format, 217

AlphaAnimation class, 287

alpha channels, GIMP graphic
editor, 121-124

Amazon

digital media industry, 9

Kindle Fire

Android 2.2 Eclair, 69

Android 4.0 Ice Cream
Sandwich, 69

sensors reported, 164

AMR (narrow band) (FFmpeg)
audio format, 217

Android 4/Google. *See also*
Android OS/devices

Apps screen, 6

based on Linux 3.0, 3

compatibility of
games/apps, 6

hardware requirements, 11-12

Home button, 4-5

home screen, 4-5

versus iPhone, 4

licensing, 4, 6, 10

market share, 4, 9, 12

non proprietary, 4

Plants vs. Zombies, 7

programming games, 7

Return button, 4-5

Search field with voice
recognition, 4

Tasks button, 4-5

Unity game engine
support, 226

Android Development Tools
(ADT), 25-28

android.graphics.Bitmap
namespace, 112

android.hardware classes

methods

getSensorList(), 163

onAccuracyChanged(),
158-159

onCreate(), 158-159, 163

onSensorChanged(),
158-159

Sensor, 160, 162, 165

SensorEvent, 162, 165

- SensorEventListener, 158, 162, 165
- SensorManager, 158, 162
- Android NDK, C++ for components, 8**
 - pixel buffer access, 8
 - support for 3D rendering and audio, 8
- Android OS/devices. See also Android 4/Google**
 - ABD (Android Debug Bridge)
 - installing, 65-68
 - running code, 69-71
 - versus USB device driver, 65-68
 - adult toy, 7
 - Android Device Settings, options, 66-67
 - derivative of iOS/Apple, 9
 - history, 9-10
 - Linux kernel numbers, 10
 - release dates, 10
 - versions and code names, 10
 - versus iPhone, 4
 - licensing, 4, 6, 10
 - logo, 12
 - Mac OS X or Linux development, 66
 - market share, 4, 9, 12
 - non proprietary, 4
 - quick-to-market release, 10
 - rooting, 66
 - tablets, screen definitions, 107-108
 - versions to program for, 69
 - XNA Game Studio, Microsoft, similar to Android, 78
- Android SDK (Software Development Kit). See SDK**
- Android Virtual Device. See AVD**
- animation and bitmaps, 269**
 - Runnable Animation Demo, 134-140
 - walking character, 134-140
 - Bitmap knight [], 135
 - drawBitmap() method, 135
 - frames, 135
 - InputStream object, 135
 - for loops, 135
- Animation class/animation systems, 281**
 - classes
 - AlphaAnimation, 287
 - constructors, 287
 - Animation, 281
 - CirclingBehavior, 360-361
 - CircularMovement Animation, 292
 - FenceBehavior, 326-327, 362, 388-395
 - FrameAnimation, 288-290
 - ReboundBehavior, 387-388
 - SpinAnimation, 290-291
 - ThrobAnimation, 291-292, 324-325
 - VelocityBehavior, 359-360
 - WarpBehavior, 325-326, 363-364
 - WarpRect, 309-311
 - methods, 282
 - destroying/removing sprites from groups, 358-359
- Animation Demo**
 - frames
 - arranging, 270
 - drawing, from strip images, 270-271
 - source code, 275-278
 - sprite sheets
 - for asteroid animation, 273-274
 - for zombie animation, 275-274
- Animation System Demo, 293-297**
- Apple products. See also iOS/Apple; iPad; iPhone; iPod; iTunes**
 - Apple II, 7
 - Apple Macintosh, 7
- Arkanoïd, 386**
- AssetManager class, 117-118**
- assets**
 - adding, 115-118
 - AssetManager class, 117-118
 - converting from one format to another, 115-116
 - copying, 121, 271
 - error handling, 119
 - InputStream object, 118
 - istream.close() method, 119
 - linking, 121
- atan() and atan2() methods, Math class, 353**
- Atari devices**
 - Breakout, 386
 - history, 7
- Audacity audio editor, 214-215**
 - formats supported, 217
- audio files, with MediaPlayer, 213**
 - adding to .redraw folder, 214-215
 - Android NDK support, 8
 - exporting, 217
 - formats
 - converting from one to another, 214-216
 - exporting, 215
 - performance issues, 215
 - supported, 214, 217

- initializing, 214
- playing, 217
- R (resource identifiers), 215
- audio files, with SoundPool**
 - asset file extensions, 218
 - Audio Demo Program, 220-221
 - initializing, 218
 - loading resources, 218-219
 - playing, 219
 - multiple sounds, 218
 - R (resource identifiers), 219
- AudioManager.STREAM_MUSIC parameter, 218**
- autorotation on screens, 159-160**
- AVD (Android Virtual Device) emulator**
 - versus Android devices, 63-64
 - AVD Manager, 31, 33-34
 - creating, 32-33
 - limitations, 64
 - multi-touch input
 - receiving basic data, 149
 - receiving/storing values, 150-155
 - options
 - CPU/ABI field, 32
 - RAM size, 64
 - SD card field, 33
 - Skin, 106
 - Target field, 32, 56
 - WVGA800 display, 33, 64
 - running, 33-35, 54-59
 - single-touch input, 144
- axis directions**
 - accelerometer sensor, 161, 164
 - linear acceleration sensor, 169

B

- back buffers, 111, 113-115**
- background scrolling, seamless texture, 371-374**
- BaseSensor class, 208-209**
- Basic Graphics Demo, 95-98, 129**
- beginDrawing() method, Engine class, 262, 365**
- Bitmap class, 111**
 - alpha channels for
 - transparencies, 121-124
 - android.graphics.Bitmap namespace, 112
 - assets
 - adding, 115-118
 - AssetManager class, 117-118
 - copying, 121, 271
 - error handling, 119
 - InputStream object, 118
 - istream.close() method, 119
 - linking, 121
 - back buffer, 111, 113-115
 - background scrolling, 372-374
 - Bitmap Loading Demo, 120, 125-126, 129-130
 - Config.ARGB_8888 parameter, 112, 119
 - file formats, 115
 - front buffer, 111
 - methods
 - BitmapFactory.decodeStream(), 118-119
 - createBitmap(), 112, 373-374
 - drawBitmap(), 120
 - Texture class, 246

- BitmapFactory.decodeStream() method, 118-119**

- Bitmap knight [], 135**

- Bitmap Loading Demo, 120, 125-126, 129-130**

- bitmaps and animation, 269**

- Runnable Animation Demo, 134-140

- walking character, 134-140

- Bitmap knight [], 135

- drawBitmap() method, 135

- frames, 135

- InputStream object, 135

- for loops, 135

- BMP file format, 115**

- bounding circles (radial) collision detection, 335-336**

- bounding rectangles (box) collision detection, 333-336**

- Box2D physics library, 233**

- box (bounding rectangles) collision detection, 333-336**

- boxes, 93-94**

- Breakout, 386**

- Buffered Graphics Demo, 113-115**

- buffers, front and back, 111, 113-115**

C

- C++ and Android NDK**

- libraries, 8

- supplementing Android SDK, 8

- support

- for Open GL ES 2.0, 8

- for Open SL ES 2.0, 8

- Canvas class, 89-90**

- Basic Graphics Demo, 95-98, 129

- Create Canvas Demo, source code, 83-85, 90
- drawing
 - bitmaps, 120
 - canvas, 112
 - without onDraw() method, 132-133
- game engine core, 227, 235
- methods
 - beginDrawing(), 262
 - drawBitmap(), 120
 - drawBox(), 93-94
 - drawCircle(), 87-89, 93
 - drawColor(), 89
 - drawLines(), 93
 - drawRoundRect(), 94-95
 - drawText(), 99, 101-102
 - drawTriangle(), 95
 - getHolder(), 132
 - lockCanvas(), 132-133, 262
 - onDraw(), 88-89, 111, 131
 - invalidate(), 130
 - Paint.setColor(), 95, 99, 101-102
 - Paint.setStyle(), 95
 - Paint.setTextSize(), 99, 101-102
 - unlockCanvasAndPost(), 132-133, 262
- portrait and landscape mode output, 99
- Style.FILL, 95
- Style.STROKE, 95
- SurfaceHolder variable, 132-133
- SurfaceView class, 132
- View class, 132
- Cartesian coordinate systems, 301-302
- circles, 87-89, 93
- CircularMovementAnimation class, 292**
- C# language**
 - similar to Java, 78
 - XNA Game Studio, 78
- .class extension, 8**
- collisioncheck() method, Engine class, 341-342, 368**
- CollisionDemo, 343-347**
- collision detection techniques**
 - bounding circles, 335-336
 - bounding rectangles, 333-336
- collision() method, Engine class, 337, 347, 366, 393**
- Commodore 64, history, 7**
- compass sensors, 195, 211**
- Config.ARGB_8888 parameter, 112, 119**
- Conley, Ron, 258**
- coordinate systems, 301-304**
 - Cartesian, 301-302
 - transforming coordinates, 300, 303-305
- cos() method, Math class, 350**
- createBitmap() method, 112**
- Create Canvas Demo**
 - output, 85
 - running on devices, 90
 - source code, 83-85
- Cupcake code name, 10**
- AVD Skin option, 106**
- dark over light text display, 107**
- density-independent pixel (dip), 104**
- DisplayMetrics class, 106**
- general resolutions/densities, 106**
- general sizes/resolutions, 105**
- Screen Resolution Demo, 107-109**
- digital media industry, 9**
- DirectX SDK, 20**
- Documents app, 10**
- Donut code name, 10**
- double buffering, 111**
- drawBitmap() method, 120, 135**
 - limitations, 308
 - Matrix class, 299, 305
- drawBox() method, Canvas class, 93-94**
- drawCircle() method, Canvas class, 87-89, 93**
- drawColor() method**
 - Canvas class, 89
 - Engine class, 365
- draw(delta) method, Engine class, 228**
- drawing**
 - bitmaps, 120
 - canvas, 112
 - without onDraw() method, 132-133
- drawLines() method, 93**
- draw() method**
 - Engine class, 262, 365, 393
 - Sprite class, 262, 290
- drawRoundRect() method, 94-95**
- drawSheetFrame() method, Sprite or Texture classes, 273**

D

- Dalvik Debug Monitor, 70**
- DDMS Perspective, Eclipse IDE, 70**
- densities for screens**
 - AVD for each device tested, 107

drawStripFrame() method, Sprite class, 271

drawText() method, 99, 101-102
 portrait and landscape mode output, 99

drawTriangle() method, 95

DrawView class

game engine core, 227
 game engine rendering, 228
 graphics, 88-89
 threaded game loops, 130-131

E

Earth app, 10

Eclair code name, 10

Amazon Kindle Fire, 69

Eclipse IDE, 3, 8

.APK files (Android Packages), 233
 Classic version, 25
 DDMS Perspective, 70
 downloading, 25
 versions available, 25
 Helios Service Release, 16, 25
 installing
 ADT plug-in, 25-28
 with JDK, 16
 for Java Developers version, 25

versus NetBeans, 9

official IDE, 25
 Package Explorer, Assets folder, 116-118, 271
 preferred for Android development, 16
 programming games, 7

projects

Android project wizard, 230
 Android “wizard” dialog, 80
 Application Info dialog, 231
 copying/pasting, 269
 Java compiler requirements, 140
 Javadoc for self-documented code, 103-104
 new projects, 230
 new project target, 69-70, 231
 Package Name field, 231-232

perspectives, Java, 149-150

properties, 233, 263
 references, 263

versus NetBeans IDE, 80
 and SDK, 40

build target, 45
 NBAndroid plug-in, configuring, 49
 new projects, 40-43

endDrawing() method, Engine class, 262, 365

Engine class

conditional test with alive property, 364-365

methods

addToGroup() method, 324, 392
 beginDrawing(), 262, 365
 collision(), 337, 347, 366, 393
 collisioncheck(), 341-342, 368
 draw(), 262, 365, 393
 drawColor(), 365

draw(delta), 228
 endDrawing(), 262, 365
 getGroup(), 368
 load(), 392
 removeFromGroup(), 324
 run(), 338-341, 365-367
 toString(), 368
 update(), 393
 update(delta), 228

entity grouping, 322-324

LinkedList object, 321
 adding properties, 322
 initializing, 322

Entity Grouping Demo, 327-331

F

Feldman, Ari, 270

FenceBehavior class, 326-327, 362, 388-395

FLAC audio format, 217

Float2 or Float3 classes, 182-183

Float3 p_data variable, 193
 for loops, 135

FrameAnimation class, 288-290

frames, 135

front buffers, 111

Froya code name, 10

G

game developers

compatibility warning, 6
 porting to other platforms, 6

game engines

- components, 227
- design goals, 226-227
- engine core component, 227
 - Engine class, 235-243
 - TextPrinter class, 244-246
 - Texture class, 246-247
 - Timer class, 243-244
- Engine Test Demo Project
 - creating, 247-248
 - logging demo, 252-253
 - source code, 249-251
- Game Engine Library project, 229-233, 288
 - android.engine.VectorMath class, 229
 - .APK file (Android Package), 233
 - creating, 230-232
 - DotProduct() method, 229
 - VectorMath class, 229
- main thread component, 228
- rendering component, 228
- startup component, 227-228
- Unity, 226

game examples

- Ball and Paddle, 385
 - automated ball movement, 386-388
 - automated paddle restriction, 388-390
 - source code, 390-394
- Shoot-'Em-Up
 - output, 375-394
 - source code, 374-395

getBitmap() method, Texture class, 246

getBounds() method, Sprite class, 342-343, 368

getBoundsScaled() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getCanvas() method, Sprite class, 262

getCollidable() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getCollided() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getGroup() method, Engine class, 368

getHolder() method, Canvas class, 132, 228

getIdentifier() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getName() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getOffender() method, Sprite class, 342-343

getSensorList() method, SensorManager class, 163

GIF file format, 115

GIMP graphic editor

- alpha channels for transparencies, 121-124
- converting assets from one format to another, 115-116

Gingerbread code name, 10

Google Drive app, 10

GPS location service versus sensors, 158

Graphics Demo project code, 86-87

- Canvas class, 89-90
 - drawColor() method, 89
- graphics shapes, 90
- onDraw() method, 88-89

DrawView class, 88-89

MainActivity class, 88-89

package and import statements, 88

Paint class, 89

View class, 90

gravity sensors, 194

- algorithm, 181
- constants/values, 182
- converting 3D to 2D coordinate, 183
- Float2 or Float3 classes, 182-183
- initializing, 181
- onSensorChanged() method, 182
- reading, 182
- testing, 183-188

GSM 6.10 WAV (mobile) audio format, 217

gyroscope sensors, 194-195, 210

H

H15 Game Engine Library, 248

H16 Game Engine Library, 263

H16 Sprite Demo, 262

H17 Game Engine Library, 270

H19 Game Engine Library, 322

H23 Game Engine Library, 367, 375

H23 Velocity Scrolling Demo, 375

hand-held video game systems, 7

Helios Service Release, Eclipse IDE, 16, 25

Honeycomb code name, 10, 69

I

IBM PCs, 7

Ice Cream Sandwich code name, 3-4, 10, 69

Amazon Kindle Fire, 69

identity matrix, 300

IDEs (integrated development environments), 16

init() method, 252

InputStream object, 118, 135

int change constructor, 287

int maxAlpha constructor, 287

int() method, 390

int minAlpha constructor, 287

invalidate() method, 130

iOS/Apple, Android as

derivative of, 9

iOS/Apple versus Android and Windows Phone

hardware control, 3

licensing, 4-6

market share, 4, 9, 12

iPad

adult toy, 7

versus Android, 9

development of, 9

iPhone

adult toy, 7

versus Android 4, 4

development from iPod, 9

and Palm Pilot, 9

Plants vs. Zombies, 7

and Pocket PC, 9

release in 2007, 9

Unity game engine support, 226

iPod

versus Android, 9

iPhone development, 9

istream.close() method, 119

iTunes, development of, 9

J

JAR (Java Archive) utility, 269

Java

compiler requirements, 140

importance of experience, 8

JAR (Java Archive) utility, 269

modulus operator, 273

new classes, 288-289

programming games, 7

similar to C# language, 78

Java Development Kit. See JDK

Javadoc for self-documented code, 103-104

.java extension, 8

Java Runtime Environment.

See JRE

JDK (Java Development Kit), 8

Enterprise Edition, 16

installing, with Eclipse, 16

Java Standard Edition 7, 16

NetBeans

downloading, 17

installing, 16-20

installing, default

locations, 19-20

license agreement, 18-20

plug-in for, 16

versions available, 17

Jelly Bean code name, 3, 10, 69

JPEG file format, 115

JRE (Java Runtime Environment), 8, 16

K

Katz, Phil, 233

Kindle Fire, Amazon

Android 2.2 Eclair, 69

Android 4.0 Ice Cream Sandwich, 69

sensors reported, 164

L

landscape orientation, 99, 159-160

licensing

Android OS/devices, 4, 6, 10

iOS/Apple, 4-6

lifetimes for programs (activities), 79

foreground, 79

visible, 79

light detector sensor, 195

Linear Acceleration Demo, 171-177

linear acceleration sensors, 193, 210

versus accelerometer, 169

initializing sensor, 170-171

methods

onPause(), 171

onResume(), 171

registerListener(), 171

unregisterListener(), 171

reading sensor, 171

velocity, 170

X and Y values, 169

lines, 93

LinkedList object, 321, 392

adding properties, 322

initializing, 322

Linux

and Android development, 8, 66

basis for Android 4, 3

versus iOS and Windows Phone OS, licensing, 4

load() method, Engine class,
252, 392

lockCanvas() method, 132-133,
262

Log statement, 252

M

M4A (AAC) (FFmpeg) audio
format, 217

Mac OS X

and Android development, 66
4.8 or later, 8

Plants vs. Zombies, 7

magnetic field (compass),
157-158

MainActivity class, 88-89

main() function, MAC OS X, versus
Activity class, 77

Maps app, 10

market share

Android OS devices, 4, 9, 12
iOS/Apple, 4, 9, 12
Windows Phone, 4, 9

Math class methods

atan() and atan2(), 353
cos(), 350
sin(), 350
toDegrees(), 305, 350
toRadians(), 305, 350

Matrix class, 300-301

values stored, 303-304

matrix rotation

radians versus degrees, 305
rotation values, 305
X, Y, and Z components,
306

transformations with Sprite
class, 307

combined with scaling and
translation, 307-308

matrix scaling

methods, 306-307

scale values, 307

transformations with Sprite
class, 307

combined with rotation and
translation, 307-308

Matrix Transforms Demo

getting screen resolution, 309

rendering frames to scratch
bitmaps, 308

Sprite class

transforming rotation,
scaling, and translation,
307-308

updated, 311-316

warping behavior, 309-311

matrix translation

coordinate systems, 301-304

identity matrix, 300

transformations with Sprite
class, 307

combined with rotation and
scaling, 307-308

transforming coordinates,
300, 303-305

zero matrix, 300

MediaPlayer audio files, 213

adding to .redraw folder,
214-215

Android NDK support, 8

exporting, 217

formats

converting from one to
another, 214-216

exporting, 215

performance issues, 215

supported, 214, 217

initializing, 214

playing, 217

R (resource identifiers), 215

MediaPlayer class

audio files, 213

initializing, 214

method comments, Javadoc,
103-104

Microsoft, XNA Game Studio,
similar to Android, 78

MIDI file format, 214

modulus operator, Java, 273

MotionEvent parameter, 151

multi-touch, 151

getX() and getY()

methods, 149

single- and multi-touch, get.

PointerCount() method, 149

single-touch, 144-147

MOVE event, 144

MP2 audio format, 217

MP3 audio format, 9, 214, 217

MS-DOS OS, 7

Multi-touch Demo, 150-155

multi-touch input

methods

getX() and getY(), 149

onTouch(), 151

Point(), 151

MotionEvent parameter, 151

Multi-touch Demo, 151-155

receiving basic data, 149

and storing values,
150-155

receiving/storing values,
150-155

N

Napster, 9

NBAndroid plug-in, 36, 38-40
 configuring, 49
 New Android Application dialog, 80-81

NetBeans IDE, 3, 8
 available plug-ins, 38-39
 versus Eclipse, 9
 “Hello, Android!” program
 building, 62
 editing, 60
 running, 62
 and JDK
 downloading, 17
 installing, 16-20
 installing, default locations, 19-20
 installing plug-in, 16
 license agreement, 18-20
 plug-in for, 16
 NBAndroid plug-in, 36, 38-40
 configuring, 49
 new projects, 47-48
 Output window, 53
 package naming, 51
 running project in AVD, 54-59
 Target Platform table, 51
 Output window, 53, 62
 Package Name field, 51, 82
 programming games, 7
 Project Browser, Source Packages, 82
 projects, 47-48
 creating, 79-81
 New Android Application dialog, 80-82
 running in AVD, 54-59

versus Eclipse IDE, 80
 and SDK
 available plug-ins, 38-39
 NBAndroid plug-in, 36, 38-40
 Target Platform table, 51, 82
 version 7.1, 16-17

New Android Project Wizard, 43-44

Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), 7
 DSi and Plants vs. Zombies, 7
 Nintendo DS family, 7
 Wii, 7

O

OGG file format, 214

Ogg Vorbis audio format, 217

onAccuracyChanged() method, 158-159

onCreate() method
 Activity class, 78-79, 85
 game engine startup, 227
 engine test, 252
 SensorManager class, 158-159, 163
 Tricorder class, 197

onDestroy() method, Activity class, 78-79

onDraw() method
 Canvas class, 88-89, 111, 131-132
 Context parameter, 131
 game engine rendering, 228
 invalidate() method, 130

onPause() method
 Activity class, 78, 85-86
 linear acceleration, 171
 Tricorder class, 197

onResume() method
 Activity class, 78, 85-86
 linear acceleration, 171
 Tricorder class, 197

onSensorChanged() method, 158-159
 gravity sensors, 182
 linear acceleration sensors, 171
 pressure sensors, 189

onStart() method, Activity class, 78-79, 85

onStop() method, Activity class, 78-79

OnTouchListener
 game engine core, 227
 single-touch input, 143-148

onTouch() method, 151
 multi-touch, 151
 single-touch, 144-147

Open GL ES 2.0 and Open SL ES 2.0, 8

orientation
 disabling changes, 159-160
 gravity sensors, 182
 landscape and portrait, 159-160
 drawText() method, 99

OS X (Apple), 7

P

Package Explorer, 43
 bitmap assets, 271
 File Operation confirmation dialog, 116-117
 file properties, 117-118

Paint class, 89

Paint.NET graphic editor, 115-116

Paint.setColor() method, 95, 99-102

Paint.setStyle() method, 95

Paint.setTextSize() method, 99-102

Palm Pilot, and **iPhone**, 9

pause() method, **Thread** class, 131

PCs, history of use, 7

Picasa app, 10

pixel buffer access, **Android** **NDK**, 8

Plants vs. Zombies, 7

PNG file format, 115

Pocket PC, and **iPhone**, 9

podcasts, 9

Point() points, 151

PopCap Games, **Plants vs. Zombies**, 7

portrait orientation

- Canvas class output, 99
- disabling accelerometer changes, 159-160

postRotate() method, **Matrix** class, 305

postScale() method, **Matrix** class, 307

postTranslate() method, **Matrix** class, 304-305

Preferences, **Eclipse IDE**, **Android** build target, 45

preRotate() method, **Matrix** class, 305

preScale() method, **Matrix** class, 307

pressure sensors, 210

preTranslate() method, **Matrix** class, 304-305

Prokein, **Reiner**, free game art, 134

- castle images, 116

character sprites

- dragon, 257

- knight, 257

- trees, 255

proximity sensors, 177-178, 193-194, 210

- infrared detector, 177

- uses, 178

R

radial (bounding circles) collision detection, 335-336

ReboundBehavior class, 387-388

registerListener() method, linear acceleration, 171

removeFromGroup() method, **Engine** class, 324

resolutions for screens

- AVD for each device tested, 107

- AVD Skin option, 106

- bitmaps, 112

- dark over light text display, 107

- density-independent pixel (dip), 104

- DisplayMetrics** class, 106

- general screen

- resolutions/densities, 106

- sizes/resolutions, 105

- Screen Resolution Demo**, 107-109

resume() method, **Thread** class, 131

rounded rectangles, 94-95

RTS (real-time strategy) games, 353

run() method

- Engine** class, 338, 366-367

- Runnable** class, 130-132

- thread updating, 322

Runnable Animation Demo, 134-140

Runnable class, 130

- game engine core, 227

- run() method**, 130-132, 228

S

Samsung Galaxy Nexus, 11

- Android** hardware, 12

Samsung Galaxy Tab, 11-12

screen autorotation, 159-160

screen densities and resolutions

- AVD for each device tested, 107

- AVD Skin option, 106

- dark over light text display, 107

- density-independent pixel (dip), 104

- DisplayMetrics** class, 106

- general resolutions/densities, 106

- general sizes/resolutions, 105

- Screen Resolution Demo**, 107-109

Screen Resolution Demo, 107-109

SDK (Software Development Kit), 7-8

- ADT plug-in, 25-28

- Android NDK** supplement, 8

- Canvas class, 90
- downloading, 20-21
- Eclipse IDE, 40
 - build target, 45
 - NBAndroid plug-in, configuring, 49
 - new projects, 40-43
- history of Android 4, 9
- installing, 19-23
 - default folder, 22
- JDK required, 21
- NetBeans IDE
 - available plug-ins, 38-39
 - NBAndroid plug-in, 36, 38-40
- operating systems supported, 8
- SDK Manager
 - additional versions, 24
 - downloading/installing all packages, 25-26
 - enabling, 23
 - Extras, Android Support, 24
 - running, 23-24
 - verification dialog, 25
- sensors supported, 157-158
- system requirements, 8-9
- Sega Master System (SMS), 7**
- self-documented code, 103-104**
 - testing, 104
- Sensor class, 160, 162, 165**
- SensorEvent class, 162, 165, 189**
 - SensorEvent.values array, 191
- SensorEventListener class, 162, 165**
 - implements statement, 158, 171
 - methods
 - onAccuracyChanged(), 158, 159
 - onSensorChanged(), 158-159, 171, 189
- SensorManager class, 158, 162, 170**
 - gravity constants/values, 182
 - methods
 - getSensorList(), 163
 - onCreate(), 158-159, 163
- SensorPanel class, 202-203**
- sensors**
 - Accelerometer Demo, 164-167
 - accelerometer sensor, 157-158, 193, 209
 - accelMotion variable, 162
 - initializing, 160-161
 - versus linear acceleration, 169
 - movement of, 161-162
 - android.hardware classes, 162
 - BaseSensor class, 192
 - compass sensor, 195, 211
 - GPS location service not sensor, 158
 - gravity sensor, 194
 - algorithm, 181
 - constants/values, 182
 - converting 3D to 2D coordinate, 183
 - Float2 or Float3 classes, 182-183
 - initializing, 181
 - onSensorChanged() method, 182
 - reading, 182
 - testing, 183-188
 - Gravity Sensor Demo, 183-188
 - gyroscope sensor, 194-195, 210
 - light detector sensor, 195
 - Linear Acceleration Demo, 171-177
 - linear acceleration sensor, 193, 210
 - versus accelerometer, 169
 - initializing sensor, 170-171
 - onPause() method, 171
 - onResume() method, 171
 - reading sensor, 171
 - registerListener() method, 171
 - unregisterListener() method, 171
 - velocity, 170
 - X and Y values, 169
 - list of, getting, 163-164
 - magnetic field (compass), 157-158
 - pressure sensor, 188, 210
 - atmospheric pressure levels, 189
 - initializing, 189
 - reading, 189
 - proximity sensor, 177-178, 193-194, 210
 - infrared detector, 177
 - uses, 178
 - screen autorotation, 159-160
 - Tricorder Demo, 196-211
- Sensors class, 205**
- setBounds() method, Matrix class, 342-343**
- setCollidable() method, Matrix class, 342-343**
- setCollided() method, Matrix class, 342-343**
- setIdentifier() method, Matrix class, 342-343**
- setName() method, Matrix class, 342-343**

setOffender() method, Matrix class, 342-343

setRotate() method, Matrix class, 305, 308

setScale() method, Matrix class, 306, 308

setTitle() method, Activity class, 78

setTranslate() method, Matrix class, 304, 308

single-touch input

MotionEvent parameter, 144-147
 get.PointerCount() method, 149

MOVE event, 144

OnTouchListener, 143-148

onTouch() method, 144-147

Single Touch Input Demo, 144-148

testing on emulator, 144

UP event, 144

View class, 143-148

Single Touch Input Demo, 144-148

sin() method, Math class, 350

Sony products, Walkman, 9

Sony PSP family, 7

SoundPool audio files

asset file extensions, 218

Audio Demo Program, 220-221

initializing, 218

loading resources, 218-219

playing, 219

 multiple sounds, 218

 R (resource identifiers), 219

SoundPool class

initializing, 218

sound effects, 218

SpinAnimation class, 290-291

Sprite class, 258-260

blueprinting versus

 evolving, 259

enhancements, 284-286

methods

 addAnimation(), 287

 animate(), 283

 draw(), 262

 drawSheetFrame(), 273

 getBounds(), 342-343

 getBoundsScaled(), 342-343

 getCanvas(), 262

 getCollidable(), 342-343

 getCollided(), 342-343

 getIdentifier(), 342-343

 getName(), 342-343

 getOffender(), 342-343

 properties, adding, 342

 setBounds(), 342-343

 setCollidable(), 342-343

 setCollided(), 342-343

 setIdentifier(), 342-343

 setName(), 342-343

 setOffender(), 342-343

sprites

 character sprites, 257-258

 creating with animation, 287-288

 creating without animation, 283

 drawing requirements, 262

 pointing in direction of movement, 352-354

 prop sprites, 255-256

 transforming rotation, scaling, and translation, 307-308

subpixel translation support, 355-358

Texture class, 261

updated, 311-316

Sprite Demo

source code, 262-265

testing Sprite class, 265-266

sprite sheets

advantages, 270

animation frames

 creating from sprite sheets, 272-273

 tiling to store as sprite sheets, 270

for asteroid animation, 273-274

for zombie animation, 275-274

Sprite Transforms Demo, 316-319

stopwatch() method, Timer class, 243

strokes and fills, changing styles, 95

Style.FILL, 95

Style.STROKE, 95

supported by SDK, 157-158

SurfaceHolder class

beginDrawing() method, 262

drawing, 132-133

game engine rendering, 228

lockCanvas() method, 262

SurfaceView class

beginDrawing() method, 262

game engine core, 227, 235

threaded game loops, 131-132

System.currentTimeMillis() method, Timer class, 243

system requirements, SDK, 8-9

T**Taito's Arkanoid**, 386**Target Platform table**, NetBeans IDE, 51**Teach Yourself Windows Phone 7 Game Programming in 24 Hours**, 6**TextPrinter class**, 244-246**texture atlas**. *See* **sprite sheets****Texture class**

- Bitmap object, 246
- core engine classes, 246-247
- drawSheetFrame() method, 273
- getBitmap() method, 246
- Sprite class, 261

TextView widget, 63, 83**threaded game loops**

- Context parameter, 131
- methods
 - invalidate(), 130
 - onDraw(), 131-132
- Runnable class, 130
- run() method, 130-132
- SurfaceView class, 131
- Thread object, 131
 - pause() method, 131
 - resume() method, 131
- Thread object, 131
 - pause() method, 131
 - resume() method, 131

Thread.sleep() method, Timer class, 243**ThrobAnimation class**, 291-292, 324-325**Timer class methods**, 243-244

- stopwatch(), 243
- System.currentTimeMillis(), 243
- Thread.sleep(), 243

toDegrees() method, Math class, 305, 350**toRadians() method**, Math class, 305, 350**Toshiba Thrive 7" tablet**, 69

- sensors reported, 163

toString() method, Engine class, 368**touch input**

- multi-touch input
 - MotionEvent parameter, 151
 - MotionEvent parameter, getX() and getY() methods, 149
 - Multi-touch Demo, 151-155
 - onTouch() method, 151
 - Point() points, 151
 - receiving basic data, 149
 - receiving/storing values, 150-155
- single-touch input
 - MotionEvent parameter, 144-147
 - get.PointerCount() method, 149
 - MOVE event, 144
 - OnTouchListener, 143-148
 - onTouch() method, 144-147
 - Single Touch Input Demo, 144-148
 - testing on emulator, 144
 - UP event, 144
 - View class, 143-148

transparencies, alpha channels, 121-124**triangles**, 95**Tricorder Demo (sensors)**

- classes
 - Accelerometer, 209
 - BaseSensor, 208-209
 - CompassSensor, 211
 - GyroscopeSensor, 210
 - LinearAcceleration, 210
 - PressureSensor, 210
 - ProximitySensor, 210
 - SensorPanel, 202-203
 - Sensors, 205
- events, trapping, 205-206
- events, unused accuracy, 207
- helper methods, 201-202
- panels, 199-200
- panels, drawing, 201
- pausing and resuming, 207-208
- printing text lines, 203-204
- updating sensors, 200-201

TYPE sensors

- ACCELEROMETER, 157
- AMBIENT_TEMPERATURE, 157
- GRAVITY, 157, 181, 182
- GYROSCOPE, 157
- LIGHT, 157
- LINEAR_ACCELERATION, 157, 171
- MAGNETIC_FIELD, 157
- PRESSURE, 157
- PROXIMITY, 158, 177
- RELATIVE_HUMIDITY, 158
- ROTATION_VECTOR, 158

U

unlockCanvasAndPost() method, 132-133, 262
unregisterListener() method, linear acceleration, 171
update(delta) method, Engine class, 228
update() method, Engine class, 393
UP event, 144
USB device drivers versus **ABD** (Android Debug Bridge), 65-68

V

vector shapes, 93
 Basic Graphics Demo, 95-98
 boxes, 93-94
 circles, 87-89, 93
 lines, 93
 rounded rectangles, 94-95
 strokes and fills, changing styles, 95
 triangles, 95
velocity
 angular velocity, 351
 calculating from specific direction, 349
 radians versus degrees, 350
 trigonometry functions, 350

linear acceleration sensors, 170
 pointing sprites to direction of movement, 352-353
 calculating angles to targets, 353-354
 sine and cosine relationships, 350-351

View class, 90, 132, 143-148

W

WarpBehavior class, 325-326
 warping behavior, 309-311
WarpRect class, 309-311
WAV audio format, 214
WAV (Microsoft) signed 16-bit **PCM** audio format, 217
WEBP file format, 115
Wikipedia, 354
Winamp, 9
Windows Media Player, 9
Windows Mobile OS. *See* **Windows Phone**
Windows Phone
 adult toy, 7
 licensing, 4
 market share, 4, 9
versus Google and Apple
 Plants vs. Zombies, 7
Windows versions, supported by Android SDK
 Vista, 8
 Windows 7, 8
 XP, 8

WinMain() function, **Windows** versus **Activity** class, 77

WMA (version 2) (**FFmpeg**) audio format, 217

WSVGA screen display, 107

WXGA800 screen display, 107

X

Xbox 360, **Plants vs. Zombies**, 7
XNA Game Studio, Microsoft, 78

Z

zero matrix, 300
ZIP compression algorithm, 233
ZIP library, 269