Introduction

sos is a Scheme object system derived from Tiny clos\(^1\), which in turn was loosely derived from clos, the Common Lisp Object System. Its basic design and philosophy is closely related to Tiny clos, but there are differences in naming and interface.

This document is a reference manual, and as such does not attempt to teach the reader about object-oriented programming. It is assumed that you already have a passing familiarity with clos and with Scheme.

In the procedure descriptions that follow, certain argument names imply restrictions on the corresponding argument. Here is a table of those names. The parenthesised name in each entry is the name of the predicate procedure that the argument must satisfy.

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\(^1\) Tiny clos was written by Gregor Kiczales of Xerox PARC; sos is derived from version 1.2 of Tiny clos.
1 Classes

A class is an object that determines the structure and behavior of a set of other objects, which are called its instances. However, in this document, the word instance usually means an instance of the class <instance>.

A class can inherit structure and behavior from other classes. A class whose definition refers to other classes for the purpose of inheriting from them is said to be a subclass of each of those classes. The classes that are designated for purposes of inheritance are said to be superclasses of the inheriting class.

A class can have a name. The procedure class-name takes a class object and returns its name. The name of an anonymous class is #f.

A class C_1 is a direct superclass of a class C_2 if C_2 explicitly designates C_1 as a superclass in its definition. In this case, C_2 is a direct subclass of C_1. A class C_n is a superclass of a class C_1 if there exists a series of classes C_2, . . ., C_n-1 such that C_i+1 is a direct superclass of C_i for all i between 1 and n. In this case, C_1 is a subclass of C_n. A class is considered neither a superclass nor a subclass of itself. That is, if C_1 is a superclass of C_2, then C_1 is different from C_2. The set of classes consisting of some given class C along with all of its superclasses is called “C and its superclasses.”

Each class has a class precedence list, which is a total ordering on the set of the given class and its superclasses. The total ordering is expressed as a list ordered from the most specific to the least specific. The class precedence list is used in several ways. In general, more specific classes can shadow, or override, features that would otherwise be inherited from less specific classes. The method selection and combination process uses the class precedence list to order methods from most specific to least specific.

When a class is defined, the order in which its direct superclasses are mentioned in the defining form is important. Each class has a local precedence order, which is a list consisting of the class followed by its direct superclasses in the order mentioned in the defining form.

A class precedence list is always consistent with the local precedence order of each class in the list. The classes in each local precedence order appear within the class precedence list in the same order. If the local precedence orders are inconsistent with each other, no class precedence list can be constructed, and an error is signalled.

Classes are organized into a directed acyclic graph. There are two distinguished classes, named <object> and <instance>. The class named <object> has no superclasses. It is a superclass of every class except itself. The class named <instance> is a direct subclass of <object> and is the base class for instance objects. Instances are special because sos has efficient mechanisms for dispatching on them and for accessing their slots.

1.1 Class Datatype

The procedures in this section may be used to construct and inspect classes.

Procedure

make-class name direct-superclasses direct-slots

Creates and returns a new class object.

Name is used for debugging: it is a symbol that appears in the printed representation of the class and has no role in the semantics of the class. Alternatively, name may be #f to indicate that the class is anonymous.
Direct-superclasses must be a list of class objects. The new class inherits both methods and slots from the classes in this list. Specifying the empty list for direct-superclasses is equivalent to specifying \([\text{list}<\text{instance}>]\).

Direct-slots describes additional slots that instances of this class will have. It is a list, each element of which must have one of the following forms:

\[
\text{name} \\
\quad (\text{name} . \text{plist})
\]

where name is a symbol, and plist is a property list. The first of these two forms is equivalent to the second with an empty plist.

Each of the elements of direct-slots defines one slot named name. Plist is used to describe additional properties of that slot. The following properties are recognized:

- **initial-value**
  This property specifies the default initial value for the slot, i.e. the value stored in the slot when an instance is created and no value is explicitly specified by the instance constructor. If neither the initial-value nor the initializer property is specified, the slot has no default initial value.

- **initializer**
  This property specifies a procedure of no arguments that is called by an instance constructor whenever an instance containing this slot is created. The value returned by the initializer procedure is the initial value of the slot.

- **accessor**
  This property specifies a generic procedure; make-class will add an accessor method for this slot to the procedure. See Chapter 3 [Slots], page 13.

- **modifier**
  This property specifies a generic procedure; make-class will add a modifier method for this slot to the procedure. See Chapter 3 [Slots], page 13.

- **initpred**
  This property specifies a generic procedure; make-class will add an “initialized?” predicate method for this slot to the procedure. See Chapter 3 [Slots], page 13.

Slot properties are combined in slightly complicated ways.

- It is not allowed to specify both initial-value and initializer for a slot in a given call to make-class; at most one of these properties may be given.

- If a slot is specified for a given class, and a slot of the same name is inherited from a superclass, then the slot properties for the two slots are combined. Slot properties from the subclass shadow those of the superclass. However, if a superclass has a slot property, and the subclass does not, the property is inherited. The resulting class never has more than one slot of a given name.

- When combining superclass and subclass slots, initial-value and initializer shadow one another. In other words, regardless of the inherited slot properties, the resulting slot has at most one of these two properties.

Examples of make-class:
(define <cell>
  (make-class '<cell> '() '()))

(define <contact>
  (make-class '<contact>
    (list <cell>)
    '((name accessor ,cell-name))))

(define <compound-cell>
  (make-class '<compound-cell>
    (list <cell>)
    '((width accessor ,cell-width)
      (height accessor ,cell-height)
      (components accessor ,cell-components
       modifier ,set-cell-components!
       initial-value ()])))

**Syntax**

**define-class**  name  direct-superclasses  direct-slot  ...

Define *name* to be a class. In its basic form, **define-class** might have been defined by

```
(define-syntax define-class
  (syntax-rules ()
    ((define-class name (class ...) slot ...)
      (define name
        (make-class (quote name)
          (list class ...) (quote (slot ...))))))
```

Note that slot properties are handled specially by **define-class**. If a **direct-slot** specifies a slot properties property list, the keys of the property list (i.e. the even-numbered elements) are not evaluated, while the datums of the property list are evaluated. The expansion above does not show the proper treatment of slot properties.

In addition to the slot properties recognized by **make-class**, **define-class** recognizes a special slot property, called **define**. The **define** property specifies that some or all of the slot accessors should be defined here; that is, generic procedures should be constructed and bound to variables, and then the accessor methods added to them.

The argument to the **define** property is a list containing any combination of the symbols **accessor**, **modifier**, and **initpred**. As an abbreviation, the argument may be one of these symbols by itself, which is equivalent to the list containing that symbol. Also, the argument may be the symbol **standard**, which is equivalent to (accessor modifier).

The argument to **define** specifies the accessors that will be defined by this form. The accessors are defined using default names, unless the names are overridden by the corresponding slot property. The default names for a class <foo> and a slot bar are foo-bar, set-foo-bar!, and foo-bar-initialized?, respectively for the accessor, modifier, and initpred. For example,

```
(define-class foo
  (bar define accessor))
```

defines an accessor called foo-bar, but
(define-class foo
  (bar define accessor accessor foo/bar))
instead defines an accessor called foo/bar. Finally,

(define-class foo
  (bar accessor foo/bar))
doesn’t define any accessor, but assumes that foo/bar is a previously-defined generic procedure and adds an accessor method to it.

`define-class` permits the specification of class options, which are options that pertain to the class as a whole. Class options are specified by overloading `name`: instead of a symbol, specify a pair whose car is a symbol and whose cdr is an alist. The following class options are recognized:

- **(predicate [name])**
  Specifies that a predicate procedure should be defined for this class. `Name` must be either a symbol or `#f`: a symbol specifies the name that will be bound to the predicate procedure, and `#f` specifies that no predicate procedure should be defined. If `name` is omitted, or if no `predicate` option is specified, a predicate procedure is defined by appending `?` to the name of the class. If the class name is surrounded by angle brackets, they are stripped off first. For example, the default predicate name for the class `<foo>` is `foo?`.

- **(constructor [name] slot-names [n-init-args])**
  Specifies that a constructor procedure should be defined for this class. `Name` must be a symbol, which is the name that will be bound to the constructor procedure; if omitted, a default name is formed by prepending `make-` to the name of the class. If the class name is surrounded by angle brackets, they are stripped off first. For example, the default constructor name for the class `<foo>` is `make-foo`. `Slot-names` and `n-init-args` correspond to the arguments of the respective names accepted by `instance-constructor`, and can take any of the allowed forms for those arguments.

- **(separator string)**
  Specifies how names for slot accessors are constructed. If this option isn’t given, the name of a slot accessor is formed by concatenating the name of the class with the name of the slot, with a hyphen between them. When this option is given, `string` is used instead of the hyphen. For example, normally a slot accessor for the slot `bar` in the class `foo` is called `foo-bar`. A class option `(separator ".")` will cause the slot accessor to be called `foo.bar`, the modifier to be called `set-foo.bar!`, and the initialization predicate to be called `foo.bar?`.

Examples of `define-class` (compare these to the similar examples for `make-class`):

```scheme
(define-class <cell> ())

(define-class (<contact> (constructor (name) no-init)) (<cell>)
  (name accessor cell-name))
```
(define-class (<compound-cell> (constructor ()) (<cell>)
 (width accessor cell-width)
 (height accessor cell-height)
 (components accessor cell-components
   modifier set-cell-components!
   initial-value ')())

make-trivial-subclass superclass1 superclass2 ...

This convenience procedure makes a subclass that defines no new slots, and that
inherits from the given superclasses. It is equivalent to the following

(make-class (class-name superclass1)
 (list superclass1 superclass2 ...)
 '()))

class? object

Returns #t if object is a class, otherwise returns #f.

subclass? class specializer

Returns #t if class is a subclass of specializer, otherwise returns #f. If specializer is
a class, the result follows from the above definition of subclass, except that a class is
a subclass of itself. If specializer is a record type, it is equivalent to having used the
record-type-class of the record type. Finally, if specializer is a union specializer,
subclass? is true if class is a subclass of one or more of the component classes of
specializer.

object-class object

Returns the class of object. Object may be any Scheme object; if object is known to
be an instance, instance-class is faster than object-class.

class-name class

Returns the name of class. This is the name argument passed to make-class when
class was created.

class-direct-superclasses class

Returns a list of the direct superclasses of class. If a non-empty direct-superclasses
argument was passed to make-class when class was created, this list is equal? to
that argument. The returned value must not be modified.

class-direct-slot-names class

Returns a list of symbols that are the names of the direct slots of class. This list
contains only those slots that were defined in the call to make-class that created
class; it does not contain slots that were inherited. The returned value must not be
modified.

class-precedence-list class

Returns a list of the superclasses of class. The order of this list is significant: it is
the method resolution order. This list will always have class as its first element, and
<object> as its last element. The returned value must not be modified.
1.2 Predefined Classes

sos provides a rich set of predefined classes that can be used to specialize methods to any of Scheme’s built-in datatypes.

<object>  
This is the class of all Scheme objects. It has no direct superclasses, and all other classes are subclasses of this class.

<instance>  
This is the class of instances. It is a direct subclass of <object>. The members of this class are the objects that satisfy the predicate instance?.

<boolean>  
Class
<char>  
Class
<entity>  
Class
<pair>  
Class
<procedure>  
Class
<record>  
Class
<string>  
Class
<symbol>  
Class
<vector>  
Class

These are the classes of their respective Scheme objects. They are all direct subclasses of <object>. The members of each class are the objects that satisfy the corresponding predicate; for example, the members of <procedure> are the objects that satisfy procedure?.

<generic-procedure>  
This is the class of generic procedure instances. It is a direct subclass of <procedure>.

<method>  
Class

This is the class of method objects. It is a direct subclass of <instance>.

<chained-method>  
Class
<computed-method>  
Class
<computed-emp>  
Class

These classes specify additional method objects with special properties. Each class is a subclass of <method>.

The following are the classes of Scheme numbers. Note that object-class will never return one of these classes; instead it returns an implementation-specific class that is associated with a particular numeric representation. The implementation-specific class is a subclass of one or more of these implementation-independent classes, so you should use these classes for specialization.
Chapter 1: Classes

These are the classes of the Scheme numeric tower. `<number>` is a direct subclass of `<math-object>`, `<complex>` is a direct subclass of `<number>`, `<real>` is a direct subclass of `<complex>`, etc.

These are the classes of exact numbers. `<exact>` is a direct subclass of `<number>`, `<exact-complex>` is a direct subclass of `<exact>` and `<complex>`, and in general, each is a direct subclass of preceding class and of the class without the exact- prefix.

These are the classes of inexact numbers. `<inexact>` is a direct subclass of `<number>`, `<inexact-complex>` is a direct subclass of `<inexact>` and `<complex>`, and in general, each is a direct subclass of preceding class and of the class without the inexact- prefix.

1.3 Record Classes

`sos` allows generic procedures to discriminate on record types. This means that a record structure defined by means of `make-record-type` or `define-structure` can be passed as an argument to a generic procedure, and the generic procedure can use the record’s type to determine which method to be invoked.\(^1\)

In order to support this, sos accepts record type descriptors in all contexts that accept classes. Additionally, every record type descriptor has an associated sos class; either the class or the record type can be used with equivalent results.

**record-type-class** record-type

Procedure

Record-type must be a record type descriptor (in other words, it must satisfy the predicate `record-type?`). Returns the class associated with `record-type`.

**record-class** record

Procedure

Record must be a record (in other words, it must satisfy the predicate `record?`). Returns the class associated with record. This is equivalent to

---

\(^1\) If the type option of `define-structure` is used, the resulting data structure is not a record and thus cannot be used in this manner.
1.4 Specializers

A specializer is a generalization of a class. A specializer is any one of the following:

- A class.
- A record type, which is equivalent to its associated class.
- A union specializer, which is a set of classes.

A specializer may be used in many contexts where a class is required, specifically, as a method specializer (hence the name), as the second argument to subclass?, and elsewhere.

**specializer? object**  
Procedure
Returns #t if object is a specializer, otherwise returns #f.

**specializer-classes specializer**  
Procedure
Returns a list of the classes in specializer. If specializer is a class, the result is a list of that class. If specializer is a record type, the result is a list of the record type’s class. If specializer is a union specializer, the result is a list of the component classes of the specializer.

**specializer=? specializer1 specializer2**  
Procedure
Returns #t if specializer1 and specializer2 are equivalent, otherwise returns #f. Two specializers are equivalent if the lists returned by specializer-classes contain the same elements.

**union-specializer specializer . . .**  
Procedure
Returns a union specializer consisting of the union of the classes of the arguments. This is equivalent to converting all of the specializer arguments to sets of classes, then taking the union of those sets.

**union-specializer? object**  
Procedure
Returns #t if object is a union specializer, otherwise returns #f.

**specializers? object**  
Procedure
Returns #t if object is a list of specializers, otherwise returns #f.

**specializers=? specializers1 specializers2**  
Procedure
Specializers1 and specializers2 must be lists of specializers. Returns #t if specializers1 and specializers2 are equivalent, otherwise returns #f. Two specializers lists are equivalent if each of their corresponding elements is equivalent.
Chapter 2: Instances

2 Instances

An instance is a compound data structure much like a record, except that it is defined by a class rather than a record type descriptor. Instances are more powerful than records, because their representation is designed to support inheritance, while the representation of records is not.

**instance-constructor** class slot-names [n-init-args]

Procedure

Creates and returns a procedure that, when called, will create and return a newly allocated instance of class.

Class must be a subclass of <instance>. Slot-names must be a list of symbols, each of which must be the name of a slot in class. N-init-args will be described below.

In its basic operation, instance-constructor works much like record-constructor: the slot-names argument specifies how many arguments the returned constructor accepts, and each of those arguments is stored in the corresponding slot of the returned instance. Any slots that are not specified in slot-names are given their initial values, as specified by the initial-value or initializer slot properties; otherwise they are left uninitialized.

After the new instance is created and its slots filled in, but before it is returned, it is passed to the generic procedure initialize-instance. Normally, initialize-instance does nothing, but because it is always called, the programmer can add methods to it to specify an initialization that is to be performed on every instance of the class.

By default, initialize-instance is called with one argument, the newly created instance. However, the optional argument n-init-args can be used to specify additional arguments that will be passed to initialize-instance.

The way this works is that the returned constructor procedure accepts additional arguments after the specified number of slot values, and passes these extra arguments to initialize-instance. When n-init-args is not supplied or is #t, any number of extra arguments are accepted and passed along. When n-init-args is an exact non-negative integer, exactly that number of extra arguments must be supplied when the constructor is called. Finally, if n-init-args is the symbol no-initialize-instance, then the constructor accepts no extra arguments and does not call initialize-instance at all; this is desirable when initialize-instance is not needed, because it makes the constructor significantly faster.

For notational convenience, n-init-args may take two other forms. First, it may be a list of symbols, which is equivalent to the integer that is the length of the list. Second, it may be the symbol no-init, which is an abbreviation for no-initialize-instance.

Note that the default method on initialize-instance accepts no extra arguments and does nothing.

Examples of instance-constructor:
(define-class <simple-reference> (<reference>)
  (from accessor reference-from)
  (to accessor reference-to)
  (cx accessor reference-cx)
  (cy accessor reference-cy))

(define make-simple-reference
  (instance-constructor <simple-reference>
    '(from to cx cy)
    'no-init))

(define-class <simple-wirenet> (<wirenet>)
  (cell accessor wirenet-cell)
  (wires accessor wirenet-wires
    modifier set-wirenet-wires!
    initial-value '()))

(define make-simple-wirenet
  (instance-constructor <simple-wirenet> '(cell)))

instance? object
  Procedure
  Returns #t if object is an instance, otherwise returns #f.

instance-class instance
  Procedure
  Returns the class of instance. This is faster than object-class, but it works only for instances, and not for other objects.

instance-of? object specializer
  Procedure
  Returns #t if object is a general instance of specializer, otherwise returns #f. This is equivalent to
  (subclass? (object-class object) specializer)

instance-predicate specializer
  Procedure
  Returns a predicate procedure for specializer. The returned procedure accepts one argument and returns #t if the argument is an instance of specializer and #f otherwise.
Chapter 3: Slots

3 Slots

An instance has zero or more named slots; the name of a slot is a symbol. The slots of an instance are determined by its class.

Each slot can hold one value. When a slot does not have a value, the slot is said to be uninitialized. The default initial value for a slot is defined by the initial-value and initializer slot properties.

A slot is said to be accessible in an instance of a class if the slot is defined by the class of the instance or is inherited from a superclass of that class. At most one slot of a given name can be accessible in an instance. Slots are accessed by means of slot-access methods (usually generated by make-class).

3.1 Slot Descriptors

Slots are represented by slot descriptors, which are data structures providing information about the slots, such as their name. Slot descriptors are stored inside of classes, and may be retrieved from there and subsequently inspected.

**class-slots** class

Procedure

Returns a list of the slot descriptors for class. This contains all slots for class, both direct slots and inherited slots. The returned value must not be modified.

**class-slot** class name error?

Procedure

Returns the slot descriptor for the slot named name in class. If there is no such slot:
if error? is #f, returns #f, otherwise signals an error of type condition-type:no-such-slot.

**slot-descriptor?** object

Procedure

Returns #t if object is a slot descriptor, otherwise returns #f.

**slot-name** slot

Procedure

Returns the name of slot.

**slot-class** slot

Procedure

Returns the class of slot. This is the class with which slot is associated. This is not necessarily the class that defines slot; it could also be a subclass of that class. If the slot was returned from class-slots or class-slot, then this class is the argument passed to that procedure.

**slot-properties** slot

Procedure

Returns an alist of the properties of slot. This list must not be modified.

**slot-property** slot name default

Procedure

If slot has a property named name, it is returned; otherwise default is returned.
slot-initial-value? slot Procedure
Returns #t if slot has an initial value, and #f otherwise. The initial value is specified by the initial-value slot property when a class is made.

slot-initial-value slot Procedure
Returns the initial value for slot, if it has one; otherwise it returns an unspecified value. The initial value is specified by the initial-value slot property when a class is made.

slot-initializer slot Procedure
Returns the initializer for slot; the initializer is specified by the initializer slot property when a class is made. This is a procedure of no arguments that is called to produce an initial value for slot. The result may also be #f meaning that the slot has no initializer.

3.2 Slot Access Methods

The procedure make-class provides slot properties that generate methods to read and write slots. If an accessor is requested, a method is automatically generated for reading the value of the slot. If a modifier is requested, a method is automatically generated for storing a value into the slot. When an accessor or modifier is specified for a slot, the generic procedure to which the generated method belongs is directly specified. The procedure specified for the accessor takes one argument, the instance. The procedure specified for the modifier takes two arguments, the instance and the new value, in that order.

All of the procedures described here signal an error of type condition-type:no-such-slot if the given class or object does not have a slot of the given name.

Slot-access methods can be generated by the procedures slot-accessor-method, slot-modifier-method, and slot-initpred-method. These methods may be added to a generic procedure by passing them as arguments to add-method. The methods generated by these procedures are equivalent to those generated by the slot properties in make-class.

slot-accessor-method class name Procedure
Returns an accessor method for the slot name in class. The returned method has one required argument, an instance of class, and the specializer for that argument is class. When invoked, the method returns the contents of the slot specified by name in the instance; if the slot is uninitialized, an error of type condition-type:uninitialized-slot is signalled.

(define-generic get-bar (object))

(add-method get-bar
(slot-accessor-method <foo> 'bar))

slot-modifier-method class name Procedure
Returns a modifier method for the slot name in class. The returned method has two required arguments, an instance of class and an object. The specializer for the first argument is class and the second argument is not specialized. When invoked, the method stores the second argument in the slot specified by name in the instance.
(define-generic set-bar! (object bar))

(add-method set-bar!
  (slot-modifier-method <foo> 'bar))

**slot-initpred-method**  
*class name*  
Procedure

Returns an “initialized?” predicate method for the slot *name* in *class*. The returned method has one required argument, an instance of *class*, and the specializer for that argument is *class*. When invoked, the method returns #t if the slot specified by *name* is initialized in the instance; otherwise it returns #f.

(define-generic has-bar? (object))

(add-method has-bar?
  (slot-initpred-method <foo> 'bar))

### 3.3 Slot Access Constructors

For convenience, and for consistency with the record-accessor procedures `record-accessor` and `record-modifier`, each of the above method-generating procedures has a corresponding accessor-generator. Each of these procedures creates a generic procedure, adds an appropriate method to it by calling the corresponding method-generating procedure, and returns the generic procedure. Thus, for example, the following are equivalent:

```
(slot-accessor <foo> 'bar)

(let ((g (make-generic-procedure 1)))
  (add-method g (slot-accessor-method <foo> 'bar))
  g)
```

**slot-accessor**  
*class name*  
Procedure

Returns a generic procedure of one argument that is an accessor for the slot *name* in *class*. The argument to the returned procedure must be an instance of *class*. When the procedure is called, it returns the contents of the slot *name* in that instance; if the slot is uninitialized, an error of type `condition-type:uninitialized-slot` is signalled.

**slot-modifier**  
*class name*  
Procedure

Returns a generic procedure of two arguments that is a modifier for the slot *name* in *class*. The first argument to the returned procedure must be an instance of *class*, and the second argument may be any object. When the procedure is called, it modifies the slot *name* in the instance to contain the second argument.

**slot-initpred**  
*class name*  
Procedure

Returns a generic procedure of one argument that is an “initialized?” predicate for the slot *name* in *class*. The argument to the returned procedure must be an instance of *class*. When the procedure is called, it returns #t if the slot *name* in that instance is initialized, otherwise it returns #f.
3.4 Slot Access Procedures

Finally, there is another set of three procedures, which access the contents of a slot directly, given an instance and a slot name. These procedures are very slow by comparison with the above.

However, note the following. You can use these procedures in the body of a define-method special form in an efficient way. If the define-method specifies the correct number of arguments, the body of the form contains a call to one of these procedures and nothing else, and the specified slot name is quoted, the form is rewritten during macro-expansion time as a call to the corresponding method-generating procedure. For example, the following are equivalent:

```
(define-method p ((v <foo>))
  (slot-value v 'bar))

(add-method p
  (slot-accessor-method <foo> 'bar))
```

**slot-value** instance name

Procedure

Returns the contents of the slot name in instance; if the slot is uninitialized, an error of type condition-type:uninitialized-slot is signalled.

**set-slot-value!** instance name object

Procedure

Modifies the slot name in instance to contain object.

**slot-initialized?** instance name

Procedure

Returns #t if the slot name in instance is initialized, otherwise returns #f.
4 Generic Procedures

Like an ordinary Scheme procedure, a generic procedure takes arguments, performs a series of operations, and perhaps returns useful values. An ordinary procedure has a single body of code that is always executed when the procedure is called. A generic procedure has a set of multiple bodies of code, called methods, from which a subset is selected for execution. The selected bodies of code and the manner of their combination are determined by the classes of one or more of the arguments to the generic procedure.

Ordinary procedures and generic procedures are called with identical procedure-call syntax.

Generic procedures are true procedures that can be passed as arguments, returned as values, and otherwise used in all the ways an ordinary procedure may be used. In particular, generic procedures satisfy the predicate `procedure?`.

4.1 Generic Procedure Datatype

The following definitions are used to construct and inspect generic procedures.

```scheme
(make-generic-procedure arity [name])
```

Creates and returns a new generic procedure. The generic procedure requires `arity` arguments.

- **Arity** may take one of the following forms. An exact positive integer specifies that the procedure will accept exactly that number of arguments. A pair of two exact positive integers specifies inclusive lower and upper bounds, respectively, on the number of arguments accepted; the CDR may be `#f` indicating no upper bound.

- **Name** is used for debugging: it is a symbol that has no role in the semantics of the generic procedure. `Name` may be `#f` to indicate that the generic procedure is anonymous. If `name` is not specified, it defaults to `#f`.

Examples:

```scheme
(define foo-bar (make-generic-procedure 2))
(define foo-baz (make-generic-procedure '(1 . 2) 'foo-baz))
(define foo-mum (make-generic-procedure '(1 . #f)))
```

```scheme
(define-generic name lambda-list)
```

Defines `name` to be a generic procedure. `Lambda-list` is an ordinary parameter list, which is exactly like the parameter list in a `lambda` special form. This expands into

```scheme
(define name
  (make-generic-procedure arity
    (quote name)))
```

where `arity` is determined from `lambda-list`.

Examples (compare to examples of `make-generic-procedure`):

(define-generic foo-bar (x y))

(define-generic foo-baz (x #!optional y))

(define-generic foo-mum (x . y))

generic-procedure? object
Procedure
Returns #t if object is a generic procedure, otherwise returns #f. Note that every
generic procedure satisfies the predicate procedure?.

generic-procedure-arity generic-procedure
Procedure
Returns the arity of generic-procedure, as specified in the call to make-generic-
procedure. The returned arity must not be modified.

generic-procedure-name generic-procedure
Procedure
Returns the name of generic-procedure, as specified in the call to make-generic-
procedure.

4.2 Method Storage

Methods are stored in generic procedures. When a generic procedure is called, it selects
a subset of its stored methods (using method-applicable?), and arranges to invoke one or
more of the methods as necessary. The following definitions provide the means for adding
methods to and removing them from a generic procedure.

add-method generic-procedure method
Procedure
Add method to generic-procedure. If generic-procedure already has a method with
the same specializers as method, then the old method is discarded and method is
used in its place.

delete-method generic-procedure method
Procedure
Removes method from generic-procedure. Does nothing if generic-procedure does not
contain method.

add-methods generic-procedure methods
Procedure
Adds methods, which must be a list of methods, to generic-procedure. Equivalent to
calling add-method on each method in methods.

generic-procedure-methods generic-procedure
Procedure
Returns a list of the methods contained in generic-procedure. The returned list must
not be modified.
4.3 Effective Method Procedure

When a generic procedure is called, it arranges to invoke a subset of its methods. This is done by combining the selected methods into an effective method procedure, or EMP, then tail-recursively invoking the EMP. compute-effective-method-procedure is the procedure that is called to select the applicable methods and combine them into an EMP.

compute-effective-method-procedure generic-procedure classes

Procedure
Collects the applicable methods of generic-procedure by calling method-applicable? on each method and on classes. Combines the resulting methods together into an effective method procedure, and returns that EMP.

compute-method generic-procedure classes

Procedure
This procedure is like compute-effective-method-procedure, except that it returns the result as a method whose specializers are classes.
compute-method is equivalent to

(make-method classes
  (compute-effective-method-procedure generic-procedure classes)))
5 Methods

A method contains a method procedure and a sequence of parameter specializers that specify when the given method is applicable.

A method is not a procedure and cannot be invoked as a procedure. Methods are invoked by the effective method procedure when a generic procedure is called.

5.1 Method Datatype

The following procedures are used to construct and inspect methods.

**make-method** specializers procedure

Procedure

Creates and returns a new method. Note that specializers may have fewer elements than the number of required parameters in procedure; the trailing parameters are considered to be specialized by <object>.

After the returned method is stored in a generic procedure, Procedure is called by the effective method procedure of the generic procedure when the generic procedure is called with arguments satisfying specializers. In simple cases, when no method combination occurs, procedure is the effective method procedure.

**method?** object

Procedure

Returns #t iff object is a method, otherwise returns #f.

**method-specializers** method

Generic Procedure

Returns the specializers of method. This list must not be modified.

**method-procedure** method

Generic Procedure

Returns the procedure of method.

**method-applicable?** method classes

Procedure

This predicate is used to determine the applicability of method. When a method is contained in a generic procedure, and the procedure is applied to some arguments, the method is applicable if each argument is an instance of the corresponding method specializer, or equivalently, if each argument’s class is a subclass of the corresponding method specializer.

method-applicable? determines whether method would be applicable if the given arguments had the classes specified by classes. It returns #t if each element of classes is a subclass of the corresponding specializer of method, and #f otherwise.
5.2 Method Syntax

The following syntactic form greatly simplifies the definition of methods, and of adding them to generic procedures.

**define-method**  
`generic-procedure lambda-list body ...`  

Defines a method of `generic-procedure`. `Lambda-list` is like the parameter list of a `lambda` special form, except that the required parameters may have associated specializers. A parameter with an associated specializer is written as a list of two elements: the first element is the parameter’s name, and the second element is an expression that evaluates to a class.

`Lambda-list` must contain at least one required parameter, and at least one required parameter must be specialized.

A `define-method` special form expands into the following:

```
(add-method generic-procedure
(make-method (list specializer ...)  
  (lambda (call-next-method . stripped-lambda-list)
    body ...)))
```

where `stripped-lambda-list` is `lambda-list` with the specialized parameters replaced by their names, and the `specializers` are the corresponding expressions from the specialized parameters. If necessary, the `specializers` are interspersed with references to `<object>` in order to make them occur in the correct position in the sequence.

For example,

```
(define-method add ((x <integer>) (y <rational>)) ...)
```

expands into

```
(add-method add
(make-method (list <integer> <rational>)  
  (lambda (call-next-method x y) ...)))
```

Note that the list of specializers passed to `make-method` will correspond to the required parameters of the method; the specializer corresponding to a non-specialized required parameter is `<object>`.

Further note that, within the body of a `define-method` special form, the free variable `call-next-method` is bound to a “call-next-method” procedure (see `make-chained-method` for details). If the `define-method` body refers to this variable, the defined method is a chained method, otherwise it is an ordinary method.

5.3 Chained Methods

Sometimes it is useful to have a method that adds functionality to existing methods. **Chained methods** provide a mechanism to accomplish this. A chained method, when invoked, can call the method that would have been called had this method not been defined: it is passed a procedure that will call the inherited method. The chained method can run arbitrary code both before and after calling the inherited method.
**Chapter 5: Methods**

**make-chained-method** *specializers procedure*  
Create and return a chained method. *Procedure* must be a procedure of one argument that returns a procedure. When the chained method is combined, its procedure will be called with one argument, a “call-next-method” procedure; it must then return another procedure that will be called when the method is invoked. The “call-next-method” procedure may be called by the method procedure at any time, which will invoke the next less-specific method. The “call-next-method” procedure must be called with the same number of arguments as the method procedure; normally these are the same arguments, but that is not required.

**chained-method?** *object*  
Returns #t if *object* is a chained method, otherwise returns #f. Note that every chained method satisfies method?.

### 5.4 Computed Methods

A **computed method** is a powerful mechanism that provides the ability to generate methods “on the fly”. A computed method is like an ordinary method, except that its procedure is called during method combination, and is passed the classes of the arguments in place of the arguments themselves. Based on these classes, the computed method returns an ordinary method, which is combined in the usual way.

Note that computed methods and computed **EMPs** both satisfy the predicate method?. They are not really methods in that they cannot be combined with other methods to form an effective method procedure; however, they are treated as methods by procedures such as add-method and method-specializers.

**make-computed-method** *specializers procedure*  
Create and return a computed method. *Procedure* will be called during method combination with the classes of the generic-procedure arguments as its arguments. It must return one of the following:

- An ordinary method (as returned by make-method or make-chained-method). The returned method’s specializers must be restrictions of specializers, i.e. each specializer in the returned method must be a subclass of the corresponding specializer in specializers. In the usual case, the returned method’s specializers are the same as specializers.
- A procedure, which is converted into an ordinary method by calling make-method on specializers and the returned procedure.
- #f, which means that the computed method declines to generate a method.

**computed-method?** *object*  
Returns #t if *object* is a computed method, otherwise returns #f.

A **computed EMP** takes the computed-method mechanism one step further. A computed EMP is like a computed method, except that it returns an effective method procedure rather than a method. compute-effective-method-procedure tries each of the applicable computed EMPS, and if exactly one of them returns an EMP, that is the resulting effective method procedure.
**make-computed-emp**  \textit{key specializers procedure}  

Procedure

Create and return a computed EMP. \textit{Procedure} will be called during method combination with the classes of the generic-procedure arguments as its arguments. It must return either an EMP or \#f.

Key is an arbitrary object that is used to identify the computed EMP. The key is used by \texttt{add-method} and \texttt{delete-method} to decide whether two computed EMPs are the same; they are the same if their keys are \texttt{equal?}. This is necessary because a generic procedure may have more than one computed EMP with the same specializers.

**computed-emp?**  \textit{object}  

Procedure

Returns \#t if \textit{object} is a computed EMP, otherwise returns \#f.

**computed-emp-key**  \textit{computed-emp}  

Generic Procedure

Returns the key for \textit{computed-emp}. 

6 Printing

The following procedures can be used to define a custom printed representation for an instance. It is highly recommended that instances be printed by `write-instance-helper`, as this ensures a uniform appearance for all objects.

**write-instance**  \textit{instance port}  
Generic Procedure
This is called by the runtime system to generate the printed representation of \textit{instance}. The methods of this procedure should write the representation to \textit{port}.

**write-instance-helper**  \textit{name instance port thunk}  
Procedure
This writes a standardized “frame” for a printed representation method. It generates the following output on \textit{port}:

\#[\textit{name hash-number . . .}]

where \textit{hash-number} is the result of calling \textit{hash} on \textit{instance}, and . . . is the output generated by \textit{thunk}.
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