CS371m - Mobile Computing

Anatomy of an Android App and the App Lifecycle

Application Components

• four primary components (plus one)
• different purposes and different lifecycles

• Activity
  – single screen with a user interface, app may have several activities, subclass of Activity
  – Most of early examples will be activities

• Service
  – Application component that performs long-running operations in background with no UI
  – example, an application that automatically responds to texts when driving
Application Components

- **Content Providers**
  - A bridge between applications to share data
  - For example, the device's contacts information
  - We tend to use these, but not create new ones

- **Broadcast Receivers**
  - Component that responds to system-wide announcements
  - Battery low, screen off, date changed
  - Also possible to initiate broadcasts from within an application

- **Intents**
  - Used to pass information between applications
Activity Stack

Most recently created is at Top

Activity 1

User currently interacting with me

Activity 2

Pressing Back or destroying A1 will bring me to the top

Activity 3

Activity N

If Activities above me use too many resources, I’ll be destroyed!
Typical Game

Conder & Darcey (2010), Fig 4.1, p. 74
Activity Lifecycle

- Activity starts
  - onCreate()
  - onStart()
  - onRestart()
      - Process is killed
          - Activity is running
              - The activity comes to the foreground
     - User navigates back to the activity
          - Activity is running
              - Another activity comes in front of the activity
      - The activity comes to the foreground
  - onPause()
  - onStop()
      - The activity is no longer visible
      - onRestart()
  - onDestroy()
      - Activity is shut down

Starting Activities

• Android applications don't start with a call to main(String[]) 
• instead a series of callback methods are invoked by the Android OS 
• each corresponds to specific stage of the Activity / application lifecycle 
• callback methods also used to tear down Activity / application
Simplified Lifecycle Diagram

- **Created**
  - onCreate()
- **Started** (visible)
  - onStart()
  - onRestart()
- **Resumed** (visible)
  - onResume()
- **Paused** (partially visible)
  - onPause()
  - onStop()
- **Stopped** (hidden)
  - onDestroy()

ready to interact with user
Understanding the Lifecycle

• Necessary to overload callback methods so your app behaves well:
• App should not crash if the user receives a phone call or switches to another app while using your app.
• App should not consume valuable system resources when the user is not actively using it.
• App should not lose the user's progress if they leave your app and return to it at a later time.
• App should not crash or lose the user's progress when the screen rotates between landscape and portrait orientation.

http://developer.android.com/training/basics/activity-lifecycle/starting.html
Primary States

• Active
  – activity is in the foreground and user can interact with it

• Paused
  – activity partially obscured by another activity and user cannot interact with it (for example when working with a menu or dialog)

• Stopped
  – activity completely hidden and not visible to user. It is in the background.
  – Activity instance and variables are retained but no code is being executed by the activity

• Dead, activity terminated (or never started)

• Two other states, Created and Started, but they are transitory onCreate -> onStart -> onResume
AndroidManifest.xml

All Activities that are part of application must be registered in Manifest

```xml
<manifest xmlns:android="http://schemas.android.com/apk/res/android"
    package="scott.examples.lifeCycleTest"
    android:versionCode="1"
    android:versionName="1.0" />

<uses-sdk android:minSdkVersion="10" />

<application
    android:icon="@drawable/ic_launcher"
    android:label="@string/app_name">
    <activity
        android:name=".LifeCycleTestActivity"
        android:label="@string/app_name">
        <intent-filter>
            <action android:name="android.intent.action.MAIN" />
            <category android:name="android.intent.category.LAUNCHER" />
        </intent-filter>
    </activity>

    <activity
        android:name=".NameGetter"
        android:label="@string/getName"/>
</application>
```

Specify Activity to start with
Purpose of Lifecycle Phases

- **Entire lifetime**: `onCreate / onDestroy`
  - Load UI
  - Could start and stop threads that should always be running
- **Visible lifetime**: `onStart / onStop`
  - Access or release resources that influence UI
  - Write info to files if necessary
- **Foreground lifetime**: `onResume / onPause`
  - Restore state and save state
  - Start and stop audio, video, animations
LifeCycleTest

• overload these methods from Activity:
  – onCreate(), onStart(), onResume(), onPause(), onStop(), onRestart(), onDestroy()
  – Use the Log class to log activity
  – methods: v, d, i, w, e
  – VERBOSE, DEBUG, INFO, WARN, ERROR
  – Create a TAG so we can filter

• Note, must always call parents method we are overriding first. **Anti pattern?**
LifeCycleTest

• Run the app and open the Logcat view.
  – Android Studio -&gt; Android button at bottom -&gt; logcat
Logcat

- After app started
Logcat

- Rotate device
Pausing - `onPause` method

• when activity paused you should
  – stop animations of other CPU intensive tasks
  – release resources such as broadcast receivers (app stops listening for broadcast info) and handles to sensors such as GPS device or handles to the camera
  – stop audio and video if appropriate
Stopping - onStop()

• Many scenarios cause activity to be stopped
• Well behaved apps save progress and restart seamlessly
• Activity stopped when:
  – user performs action in activity that starts another activity in the application
  – user opens Recent Apps window and starts a new application
  – user receives phone call
• use onStop to release all resources and save information (persistence)
How to stop an Activity yourself?

• Generally, don't worry about it!
• "**Note:** In most cases, you should not explicitly finish an activity using these methods. As discussed in the following section about the activity lifecycle, the Android system manages the life of an activity for you, so you do not need to finish your own activities. Calling these methods could adversely affect the expected user experience and should only be used when you absolutely do not want the user to return to this instance of the activity."

• methods: finish(), finishActivity()
Saving State

• activities that are paused or stopped the state of the activity (instance vars) are retained
  – even if not in foreground

• When activity destroyed the Activity object is destroyed
  – can save information via onSaveInstanceState method. Write data to Bundle, Bundle given back when restarted
Activity Destruction

• app may be destroyed under normal circumstances
  – on its own by calling finish or user pressing the back button to navigate away from app
  – normal lifecycle methods handle this onPause() -> onStop() -> onDestroy

• If the system must destroy the activity (to recover resources or on an orientation change) must be able to recreate Activity
Activity Destruction

1. `onSaveInstanceState()` → Destroyed
2. `onCreate()`
3. `onRestoreInstanceState()` → Resumed (visible)
Activity Destruction

• If Activity destroyed with potential to be recreate later
• system calls the onSaveInstanceState (Bundle outState) method
• Bundle is a data structure like a Map
  – String keys
  – put methods for primitives, arrays, Strings, Serializables (Java), and Parcels (android)
onSaveInstanceState
onRestoreInstanceState()

• systems write info about views to Bundle
• other information must be added by programmer
  – example, board state for mastermind
• When Activity recreated Bundle sent to onCreate and onRestoreInstanceState()
• use either method to restore state data / instance variables
Starting You Own Activities

• You will often start new Activities within your Activity
  – accomplish a task
  – get some data
• Click Button to get name
  – on button click (look at xml)
  – create an intent
  – call startActivityForResult
  – override onActivityResult() 
  – add new Activity to Manifest
  – add data to intent, setResult, finish

http://developer.android.com/guide/topics/fundamentals/activities.html#StartingAnActivity
Intent Demo

LifeCycle TestActivity

Intent holding constant

Name Getter

startActivityForResult()

Intent holding Name

setResult()
Playing Well (or not) With Others

• The Play Sound button causes a MediaPlayer to be created and plays a sound
• The Lifecycle app does not clean up after itself
• If app destroyed MediaPlayer keeps playing!!
References


• *Pro Android* by Hashimi & Komatineni (2009)

• Frank McCown, Harding University