



UNIVERSITY OF  
GOTHENBURG

# Monitors

## Lecture 5 of TDA384/DIT391 Principles of Concurrent Programming

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Nir Piterman

Chalmers University of Technology | University of Gothenburg  
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*Based on course slides by Carlo A. Furia and Sandro Stucki*

# Today's menu

Monitors

Signaling disciplines

Implementing monitors

Monitors in Java

Monitors: dos and don'ts

# Beyond semaphores

**Semaphores** provide a powerful, **concise** mechanism for synchronization and mutual exclusion. Unfortunately, they have several **shortcomings**:

- they are intrinsically **global** and **unstructured**: it is difficult to understand their behavior by looking at a single piece of code;
- they are **prone to deadlocks** or other **incorrect** behavior: it is easy to forget to add a single, crucial call to up or down.

In summary semaphores are a **low-level** synchronization primitive. Let's try to raise the level of abstraction.

# Monitors

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# Monitors

Monitors provide a **structured synchronization mechanism** built on top of object-oriented constructs – especially the notions of class, object, and encapsulation.

In a **monitor class**:

- attributes are **private**,
- methods execute in **mutual exclusion**.

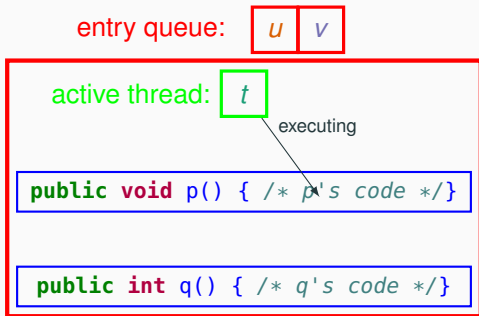
A **monitor** is an object instantiating a monitor class.

How monitors encapsulate **synchronization** mechanisms:

- attributes are shared variables, which all threads running on the monitor can see and modify,
- methods define critical sections, with the built-in guarantee that at most one thread is active on a monitor at any time.

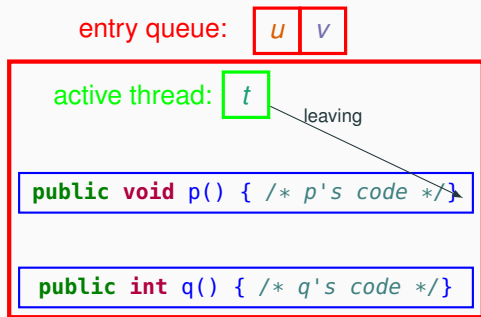
# Monitors: entry queue

Threads trying to access a monitor **queue for entry**; as soon as the active thread leaves the monitor the next thread in the entry queue gets exclusive access to the monitor.



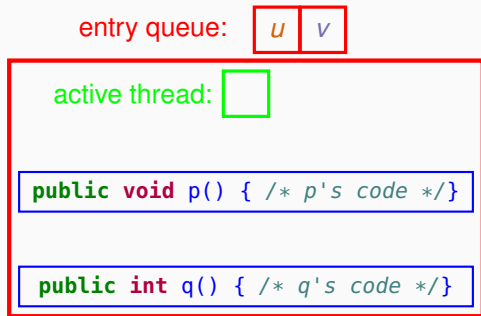
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entry queue:

v

active thread:

u

```
public void p() { /* p's code */}
```

```
public int q() { /* q's code */}
```

# Monitors in pseudo-code

We declare monitor classes by adding the pseudo-code keyword `monitor` to regular Java classes. Note that `monitor` is **not** a valid Java keyword – that is why we highlight it in a different color – but we will use it to simplify the presentation of monitors.

Turning a pseudo-code monitor class into a proper Java class is straightforward:

- mark all attributes as **private**,
- add **locking** to all public methods.

Details on how to implement monitors in Java are presented later in this class.

We also occasionally annotate monitor classes with **invariants** using the pseudo-code keyword `invariant`; `invariant` is **not** a valid Java keyword – that is why we highlight it in a different color – but we will use it to help make more explicit the behavior of classes.

# Counter monitor

A shared counter that is free from race conditions:

```
monitor class Counter {  
    int count = 0; // attribute, implicitly private  
  
    public void increment() { // method, implicitly atomic  
        count = count + 1;  
    }  
  
    public void decrement() { // method, implicitly atomic  
        count = count - 1;  
    }  
}
```

The implementation of monitors guarantees that multiple threads executing `increment` and `decrement` run in **mutual exclusion**.

# Mutual exclusion for $n$ threads

**Mutual exclusion** for  $n$  threads accessing their critical sections is straightforward to achieve using monitors: every monitor method executes **atomically** because at most one thread is running on a monitor at any time. A proper monitor implementation also guarantees **starvation freedom**.

```
monitor class CriticalSection {
    T1 a1; T2 a2; ... // shared data

    public void critical1() {
        // t1's critical section
    }
    // ...
    public void criticaln() {
        // tn's critical section
    }
}
```

```
CriticalSection cs;
-----
    thread tk
    while (true) {
        cs.criticalk();
        // non-critical section
    }
```

# Condition variables

For synchronization patterns more complex than mutual exclusion, monitors provide **condition variables**.

A **condition variable** is an instance of a class with interface:

```
interface Condition {  
    void wait();           // block until signal  
    void signal();        // signal to unblock  
    boolean isEmpty();    // is no thread waiting on this condition?  
}
```

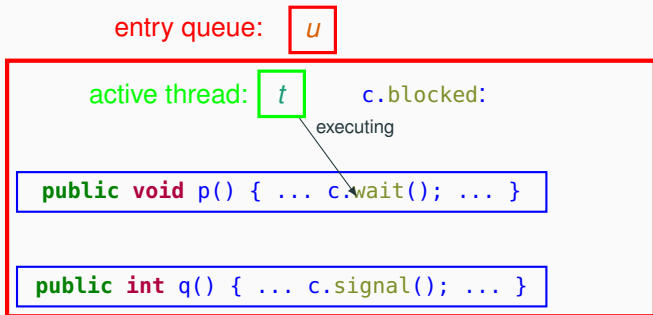
A monitor class can declare condition variables as attributes (private, thus only callable by methods of the monitor). Every condition variable `c` includes a **FIFO queue** `blocked`:

- `c.wait()` blocks the running thread, appends it to `blocked`, and releases the lock on the monitor,
- `c.signal()` removes one thread from `blocked` (if it's not empty) and unblocks it,
- `c.isEmpty()` returns **true** iff `blocked` is empty.

# Condition variables

Every condition variable `c` includes a **FIFO queue** blocked:

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- `c.signal()` removes one thread from `blocked` (if it's not empty) and unblocks it.

entry queue:

`u`

active thread:



`c.blocked`:

`t`

```
public void p() { ... c.wait(); ... }
```

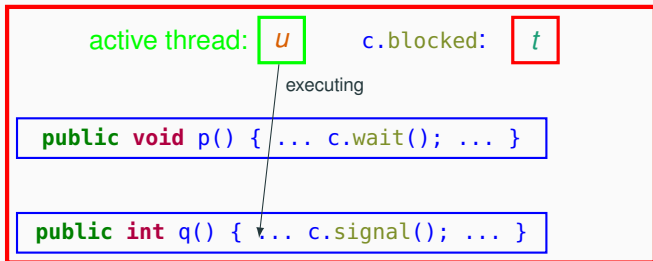
```
public int q() { ... c.signal(); ... }
```

# Condition variables

Every condition variable `c` includes a **FIFO queue** blocked:

- `c.wait()` blocks the running thread, appends it to `blocked`, and releases the lock on the monitor,
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entry queue:



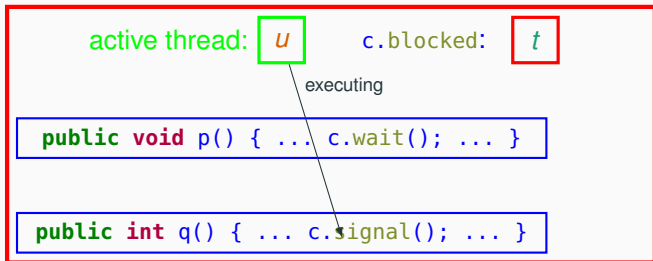


# Condition variables

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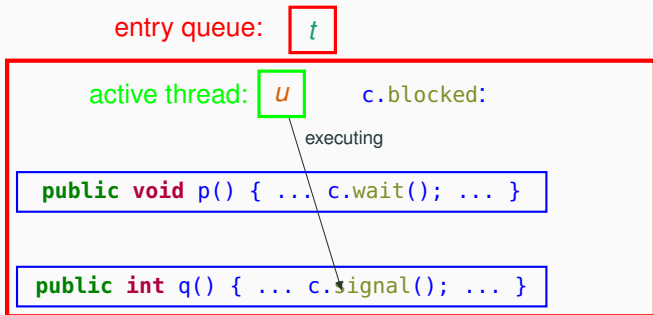
entry queue:



# Condition variables

Every condition variable `c` includes a **FIFO queue** blocked:

- `c.wait()` blocks the running thread, appends it to `blocked`, and releases the lock on the monitor,
- `c.signal()` removes one thread from `blocked` (if it's not empty) and unblocks it.



# Producer-consumer problem: recap

```
interface Buffer<T> {  
    // add item to buffer; block if full  
    void put(T item);  
  
    // remove item from buffer; block if empty  
    T get();  
  
    // number of items in buffer  
    int count();  
}
```

**Producer-consumer** problem: implement Buffer such that:

- producers and consumer access the buffer in mutual exclusion,
- consumers block when the buffer is empty,
- producers block when the buffer is full (bounded buffer variant).

# Producer-consumer with monitors: unbounded buffer

An implementation of **producer-consumer** with an **unbounded** buffer using monitors.

```
monitor class MonitorBuffer<T> implements Buffer<T> {
    Collection storage = ...; // any collection (list, set, ...)
    Condition notEmpty = new Condition(); // signal when not empty

    public void put(T item) {
        storage.add(item)           // store item
        notEmpty.signal();         // signal buffer not empty
    }

    public T get() {
        if (storage.count() == 0)
            notEmpty.wait();       // wait until buffer not empty
        return storage.remove();   // retrieve item
    }

    invariant { #storage.add == #notEmpty.signal }
}
```

# Producer-consumer with monitors: unbounded buffer

An implementation of **producer-consumer** with an **unbounded** buffer using monitors.

```
monitor class MonitorBuffer<T> implements Buffer<T> {  
    Collection storage = ...; // any collection (list, set, ...)  
    Condition notEmpty = new Condition(); // signal when not empty  
  
    public void put(T item) {  
        storage.add(item) // store item  
        notEmpty.signal() // signal buffer not empty  
    }  
  
    public T get() {  
        if (storage.count() == 0) // get in queue waiting for an item  
            notEmpty.wait() // wait until buffer not empty  
        return storage.remove(); // retrieve item  
    }  
  
    invariant { #storage.add == #notEmpty.signal }  
}
```

no effect if there are no waiting consumers

get in queue waiting for an item

# Producer-consumer with monitors: bounded buffer

Producer-consumer with a bounded buffer (capacity is the maximum size) uses two condition variables.

```
monitor class BoundedMonitorBuffer<T> extends MonitorBuffer<T> {
    Condition notFull = new Condition(); // signal when not full

    public void put(T item) {
        if (storage.count() == capacity)
            notFull.wait(); // wait until buffer not full
        super.put(item); // do as in MonitorBuffer.put(item)
    }

    public T get() {
        T item = super.get(); // do as in MonitorBuffer.get()
        notFull.signal() // signal buffer not full
        return item;
    }
}
```

# Signaling disciplines

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# Signaling disciplines

When a thread  $s$  calls `signal()` on a condition variable, it is executing inside the monitor. Since no more than one thread may be active on a monitor at any time, the thread  $u$  unblocked by  $s$  cannot enter the monitor immediately.

The **signaling discipline** determines what happens to a signaling thread  $s$  after it unblocks another thread  $u$  by signaling.

Two main choices of signaling discipline:

**signal and continue:**  $s$  continues executing;

$u$  is moved to the entry queue of the monitor;

**signal and wait:**  $s$  is moved to the entry queue of the monitor;

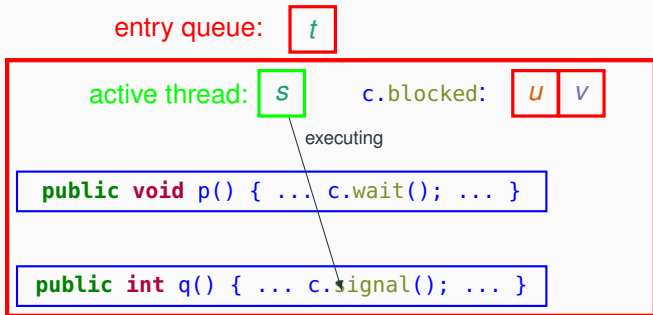
$u$  resumes executing (it silently gets the monitor's lock).



# Signal and continue

Under the **signal and continue** discipline:

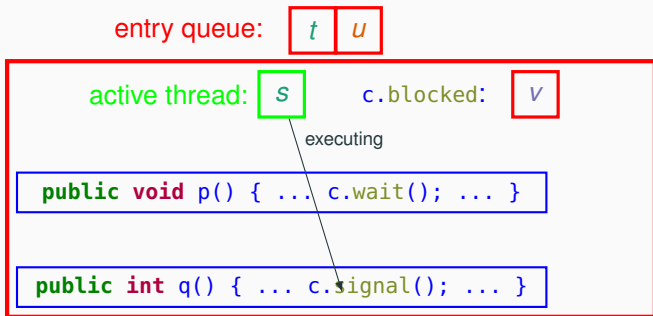
- the unblocked thread *u* is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
- the signaling thread *s* **continues** executing.



# Signal and continue

Under the **signal and continue** discipline:

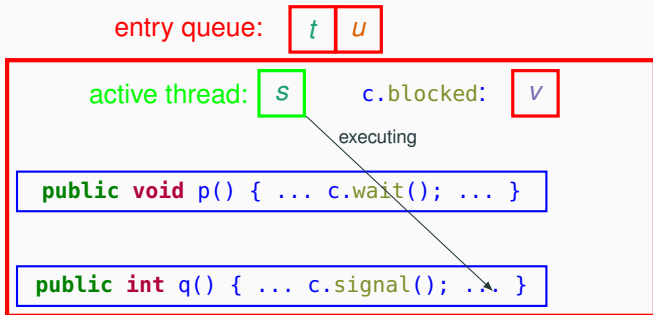
- the unblocked thread *u* is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
- the signaling thread *s* **continues** executing.



# Signal and continue

Under the **signal and continue** discipline:

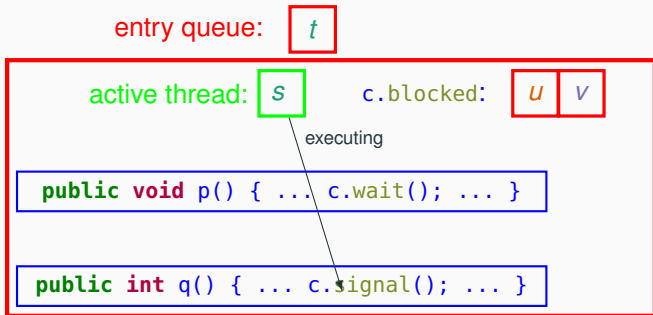
- the unblocked thread **u** is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
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# Signal and wait

Under the **signal and wait** discipline:

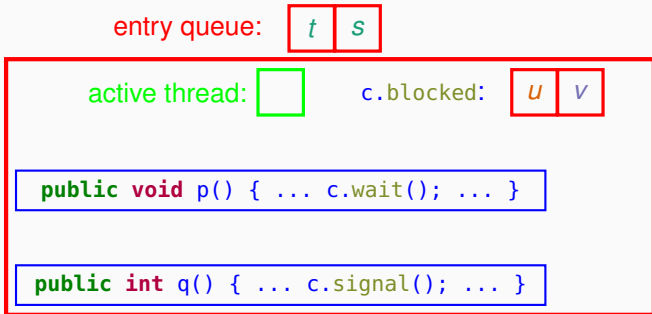
- the signaling thread **s** is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
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# Signal and wait

Under the **signal and wait** discipline:

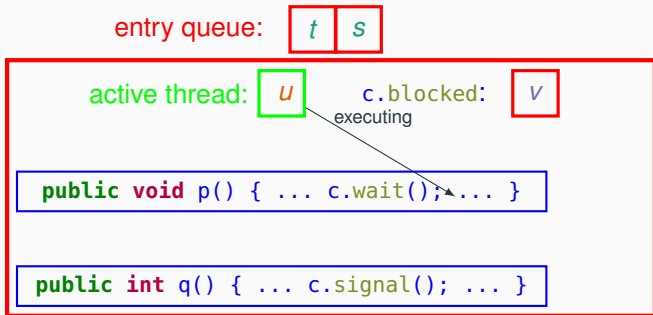
- the signaling thread **s** is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
- the unblocked thread **u** **resumes** executing.



# Signal and wait

Under the **signal and wait** discipline:

- the signaling thread **s** is moved to the monitor's **entry** queue,
- the unblocked thread **u** **resumes** executing.



# Condition checking under different signaling disciplines

Under the signal and wait discipline, it is guaranteed that the **signaled condition holds** when the unblocked thread *u* resumes execution – because it immediately follows the signal.

In contrast, under the signal and continue discipline, the **signaled condition may no longer hold** when the unblocked thread *u* resumes execution – because the signaling thread, or other threads, may change the state while continuing.

Correspondingly, there are different patterns for **waiting on a condition variable** signaled as `if (!buffer.isEmpty()) isEmpty.signal():`

## Signal and wait:

```
// check once  
if (buffer.isEmpty())  
    isEmpty.wait();  
// here !buffer.isEmpty()
```

## Signal and continue:

```
// recheck after waiting  
while (buffer.isEmpty())  
    isEmpty.wait();  
// here !buffer.isEmpty()
```

# Signal all

The **signal and continue** discipline does not guarantee that a thread resuming execution after a `wait` will find that the condition it has been waiting for is true: the signal is only a “hint”.

In spite of this shortcoming, most (if not all) implementations of monitors follow the **signal and continue** discipline – mainly because it is simpler to implement.

Monitors following **signal and continue** typically also offer a condition-variable method:

```
void signalAll(); // unblock all threads blocked on this condition
```

This tends to be inefficient, because many threads will wake up only to discover the condition they have been waiting for is still not true, but works correctly with the waiting pattern using a loop (which is still not as inefficient as busy waiting!).



## More signaling disciplines

The **signaling discipline** determines what happens to a signaling thread **s** after it unblocks another thread **u** by signaling.

Two variants of signal and continue and signal and wait are also sometimes used:

**urgent signal and continue:** **s** continues executing; **u** is moved to **the front of** the entry queue of the monitor;

**signal and urgent wait:** **s** is moved to **the front of** the entry queue of the monitor; **u** resumes executing.

To be precise: an urgent thread gets ahead of “regular” threads, but may have to queue behind other urgent threads that are waiting for entry. This is implemented by adding a `urgentEntry` queue to the monitor, which has priority over the “regular” entry queue.

## Signaling disciplines: summary

A signaling discipline defines what happens to three **sets of threads**:

**S**: signaling threads

**U**: unblocked threads

**E**: threads in the entry queue

Write  $X > Y$  to denote that threads in set  $X$  have priority over threads in set  $Y$ . Then, different signaling policies can be expressed as:

**signal and continue**  $S > U = E$

**urgent signal and continue**  $S > U > E$

**signal and wait**  $U > S = E$

**signal and urgent wait**  $U > S > E$

Other combinations are also possible, but most of them do not make much sense in practice.

# Implementing monitors

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# Monitors from semaphores

We give an overview of how to **implement monitors using semaphores**. This also rigorously defines the semantics of monitors.

- Every monitor class uses a **strong semaphore entry** to model the entry queue.
- Every monitor method acquires entry upon entry and releases it upon exit.

```
monitor class Counter {      class Counter {
    // strong/fair semaphore, initially 1
    Semaphore entry = new Semaphore(1, true);
    int x = 0;
    public void inc() {
        x = x + 1;
    }
}

    int x = 0;
    public void inc() {
        entry.down();
        x = x + 1;
        entry.up();
    }
}
```

## Condition variables: waiting

- Every condition variable uses a **queue blocked** of threads waiting on the condition.

```
abstract class WaitVariable implements Condition {  
    Queue blocked = new Queue<Thread>(); // queue of blocked threads  
  
    // block until signal  
    public void wait() { reference to running thread  
        entry.up(); // release monitor lock  
        blocked.add(running); // enqueue running thread  
        running.state = BLOCKED; // set state as blocked  
    }  
  
    // is no thread waiting?  
    public boolean isEmpty() { return blocked.isEmpty(); }  
}
```

## Condition variables: signal and continue

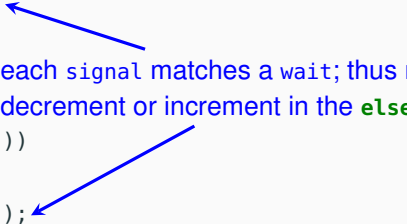
```
class SCVariable extends WaitVariable {  
    // signal to unblock  
    public void signal() {  
        if (!blocked.isEmpty()) {  
            Thread u = blocked.remove(); // u is the unblocked thread  
            entry.blocked.add(u);       // u gets moved to entry queue  
            // the running, signaling thread continues executing  
        }  
    }  
}
```

## Condition variables: signal and wait

```
class SWVariable extends WaitVariable {
    // signal to unblock
    public void signal() {
        if (!blocked.isEmpty()) {
            entry.blocked.add(running); // the running, signaling thread
                                         // gets moved to entry queue
            Thread u = blocked.remove(); // u is the unblocked thread
            u.state = READY;             // set state as ready to run
            running.state = BLOCKED;     // set state as blocked
            // the unblocked, signaled thread resumes executing
        }
    }
}
```

# Semaphores from monitors

```
monitor class StrongSemaphore implements Semaphore {  
    int count;  
    Condition isPositive = new Condition(); // is count > 0?  
  
    public void down() {  
        if (count > 0)  
            count = count - 1;  
        else isPositive.wait();  
    }  
  
    public void up() {  
        if (isPositive.isEmpty())  
            count = count + 1;  
        else isPositive.signal();  
    }  
}
```



each signal matches a wait; thus no  
decrement or increment in the **else** branches



## Semaphores from monitors: a theoretical result

The result that monitors can implement semaphores (and vice versa) is important **theoretically**: no expressiveness loss.

However, we implementing a lower-level mechanism (semaphores) using a higher-level one (monitors) is **impractical** because it's likely to be inefficient.

As usual, if you need monitors or semaphores use the efficient library implementations available in your programming language of choice. Do not reinvent the wheel!

# Monitors in Java

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## Two kinds of Java monitors

Java does not include full-fledged monitor classes, but it offers **support** to implement monitor classes following some **programming patterns**.

There are two sets of **monitor-like primitives** in Java:

- one is **language based**, and has been included since early versions of the Java language,
- one is **library based**, and has been included since Java 1.5.

We have seen bits and pieces of both already, since they feature in simpler synchronization primitives as well.

# Language-based monitors

A class JM can implement a monitor class M as follows:

- every **attribute** in JM is **private**
- every **method** in JM is **synchronized** – which guarantees it executes atomically

```
monitor class M {  
    int x, y;  
  
    public void p()  
    { /* ... */ }  
  
    public int q()  
    { /* ... */ }  
}
```

```
class JM {  
    private int x, y;  
  
    public synchronized void p()  
    { /* ... */ }  
  
    public synchronized int q()  
    { /* ... */ }  
}
```

This mechanism does **not guarantee fairness** of the entry queue associated with the monitor: entry may behave like a set.

# Language-based condition variables

Each language-based monitor implicitly include a **single condition variable** with signal and continue discipline:

- calling `wait()` **blocks** the running thread, waiting for a signal
- calling `notify()` **unblocks** any one thread waiting in the monitor
- calling `notifyAll()` **unblocks all** the threads waiting in the monitor

```
monitor class M {  
    int x; Condition isPos;  
    public void p()  
    { while (x < 0)  
        isPos.wait(); }  
    public int q()  
    { if (x > 0)  
        isPos.signal(); }  
}
```

```
class JM {  
    private int x;  
    public synchronized void p()  
    { while (x < 0)  
        wait(); }  
    public synchronized int q()  
    { if (x > 0)  
        notify(); }  
}
```

This mechanism does **not guarantee fairness** of the queue of blocked threads: blocked may behave like a set.

# How to wait in a language-based monitor

Calls to `wait()` always must be **inside a loop** checking a condition.

There are **multiple reasons** to do this:

- under the signal and continue discipline, the signaled condition may be no longer true when an unblocked thread can run;
- since the `blocked` queue is not fair, the signaled condition may be **“stolen”** by a thread that has been waiting for less time;
- since there is a single implicit condition variable, the signal may represent a condition other than the one the unblocked thread is waiting for;
- in Java (and other languages), spurious wakeups are possible: a waiting thread may be unblocked even if no thread signaled.

# Library-based monitors

A class LM can implement a monitor class M using **explicit locks**:

- add a private monitor attribute – a **fair** lock;
- every **method** in CM start by locking monitor and ends by unlocking monitor – which guarantees it executes atomically.

```
monitor class M {  
  
    int x, y;  
  
    public void p()  
    { /* ... */ }  
}  
  
class LM {  
    private final Lock monitor  
        = new ReentrantLock(true); // fair lock  
    private int x, y;  
  
    public void p()  
    { monitor.lock();  
      /* ... */  
      monitor.unlock(); }  
}
```

This mechanism **guarantees fairness** of the entry queue associated with the monitor: blocked behaves like a queue.

# Library-based condition variables

Condition variables with signal and continue discipline can be generated by a monitor's lock:

```
monitor class M {  
  
    Condition isXPos  
        = new Condition();  
    Condition isYPos  
        = new Condition();  
  
    int x, y;  
    // ...  
}
```

```
class JM {  
    private final Lock monitor  
        = new ReentrantLock(true);  
    private final Condition isXPos  
        = monitor.newCondition();  
    private final Condition isYPos  
        = monitor.newCondition();  
  
    private int x, y;  
    // ...  
}
```



## Library-based condition variables (cont'd)

Each library-based **condition variable** `c` has signal and continue discipline:

- calling `c.await()` **blocks** the running thread, waiting for a signal,
- calling `c.signal()` **unblocks** any one thread waiting on `c`,
- calling `c.signalAll()` **unblocks all** the threads waiting on `c`.

This mechanism **guarantees fairness** of the queue of blocked threads associated with the condition variable: `blocked` behaves like a queue. When `signalAll()` is called, the ordering of lock reacquisition is also fair (same order as in `blocked`) – provided the lock itself is fair.

These methods must be called while **holding the lock** used to generate the condition variable; otherwise, an `IllegalMonitorStateException` is thrown.

## How to wait in a library-based monitor

Calls to `await()` always must be **inside a loop** checking a condition. There are **multiple reasons** to do this (compare to the case of language-based monitors):

- under the signal and continue discipline, the signaled condition may be no longer true when an unblocked thread can run;
- in Java (and other languages), spurious wakeups are possible: a waiting thread may be unblocked even if no thread signaled.

# Threads, interrupted

Waiting operations (in monitors as well as in semaphores) may be **interrupted** by some low-level code that calls a thread's `interrupt()` method. This is apparent in the signature of the waiting methods, which typically may throw an object of type `InterruptedException`: interrupting a waiting thread wakes up the thread, which has to handle the exception.

We normally **ignore** the case of **interrupted threads**, since it belongs to lower-level programming. When calling waiting primitives, you typically propagate the exception to the main method (or simply catch and ignore it).

## Threads, interrupted (cont'd)

It is important that programs ensure that an interrupted thread still leaves the system in a consistent state by **releasing all locks** it holds:

- in language-based monitors, an interrupted thread in a **synchronized** method automatically releases the monitor's lock
- in library-based monitors, use a **final** block to release the monitor's lock in case of exception:

```
class LM {  
    private final Lock monitor = new ReentrantLock(true);  
  
    public void p() {  
        monitor.lock();  
        try { /* ... */ }  
        finally { monitor.unlock(); }  
    }  
}
```

## **Monitors: dos and don'ts**

---

## Nested monitor calls

What happens if a method in monitor  $M$  calls a method  $n$  in monitor  $N$  (with condition variable  $cN$ )? Different **rules** are possible:

1. Prohibit nested calls.
2. Release lock on  $M$  before acquiring lock on  $N$ .
3. Hold lock on  $M$  while also locking  $N$ .
  - 3.1 When waiting on  $cN$  release both locks on  $N$  and on  $M$ .
  - 3.2 When waiting on  $cN$  release only lock on  $N$ .

Rules 3 are prone to deadlock – especially rule 3.2 – because deadlocks often occur when trying to acquire multiple locks.

## Nested monitor calls

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  - 3.1 When waiting on  $cN$  release both locks on  $N$  and on  $M$ .
  - 3.2 When waiting on  $cN$  release only lock on  $N$ .

Rules 3 are prone to deadlock – especially rule 3.2 – because deadlocks often occur when trying to acquire multiple locks.

**Java monitors** (both language- and library-based) follow the deadlock-prone rule 3.2.

**Rule of thumb:** avoid nested monitor calls as much as possible.

Note that if  $N$  is the same object as  $M$ , nested calls are not a problem (the implicit locks are reentrant).

## Monitors: pros

Monitors provide a **structured** approach to concurrent programming, which builds atop the familiar notions of objects and encapsulation. This **raises** the level of **abstraction** of concurrent programming compared to semaphores.

Monitors introduce **separation of concerns** when programming concurrently:

- mutual exclusion is implicit in the use of monitors,
- condition variables provide a clear means of synchronization.



## Monitors: cons

Monitors generally have a larger **performance overhead** than semaphores. As usual, performance must be traded against error proneness.

The different **signaling disciplines** are a source of confusion, which tarnishes the clarity of the monitor abstraction. In particular, signal and continue is both less intuitive (because a condition can change before a waiting thread has a chance to run on the monitor) and the most commonly implemented discipline.

For complex synchronization patterns, **nested monitor calls** are another source of complications.

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