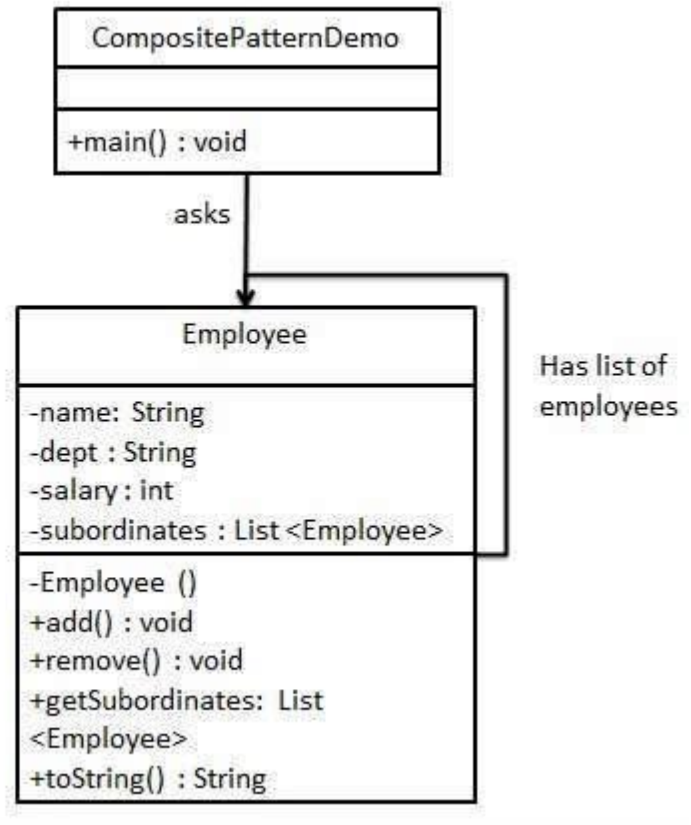
Composite pattern is used where we need to treat a group of objects in similar way as a single object. Composite pattern composes objects in term of a tree structure to represent part as well as whole hierarchy. This type of design pattern comes under structural pattern as this pattern creates a tree structure of group of objects.

This pattern creates a class that contains group of its own objects. This class provides ways to modify its group of same objects.

We are demonstrating use of composite pattern via following example in which we will show employees hierarchy of an organization.

Implementation

We have a class *Employee* which acts as composite pattern actor class. *CompositePatternDemo*, our demo class will use *Employee* class to add department level hierarchy and print all employees.



Step 1

Create *Employee* class having list of *Employee* objects.

Employee.java

```
import java.util.ArrayList;
import java.util.List;

public class Employee {
   private String name;
   private String dept;
   private int salary;
   private List<Employee> subordinates;

   // constructor
   public Employee(String name,String dept, int sal) {
      this.name = name;
      this.dept = dept;
      this.salary = sal;
      subordinates = new ArrayList<Employee>();
   }

   public void add(Employee e) {
      subordinates.add(e);
   }

   public void remove(Employee e) {
      subordinates.remove(e);
   }

   public List<Employee> getSubordinates(){
     return subordinates;
   }

   public String toString(){
      return ("Employee :[ Name : " + name + ", dept : " + dept +
", salary :" + salary+" ]");
   }
}
```

Step 2

Use the *Employee* class to create and print employee hierarchy.

CompositePatternDemo.java

```
public class CompositePatternDemo {
   public static void main(String[] args) {
      Employee CEO = new Employee("John","CEO", 30000);

      Employee headSales = new Employee("Robert","Head Sales",
20000);

      Employee headMarketing = new Employee("Michel","Head
Marketing", 20000);

      Employee clerk1 = new Employee("Laura","Marketing", 10000);
      Employee clerk2 = new Employee("Bob","Marketing", 10000);

      Employee salesExecutive1 = new Employee("Richard","Sales",
10000);
      Employee salesExecutive2 = new Employee("Rob","Sales",
10000);

      CEO.add(headSales);
      CEO.add(headMarketing);

      headSales.add(salesExecutive1);
      headSales.add(salesExecutive2);

      headMarketing.add(clerk1);
      headMarketing.add(clerk2);

      //print all employees of the organization
      System.out.println(CEO);

      for (Employee headEmployee : CEO.getSubordinates()) {
         System.out.println(headEmployee);

         for (Employee employee : headEmployee.getSubordinates()) {
            System.out.println(employee);
         }
      }
   }
}
```

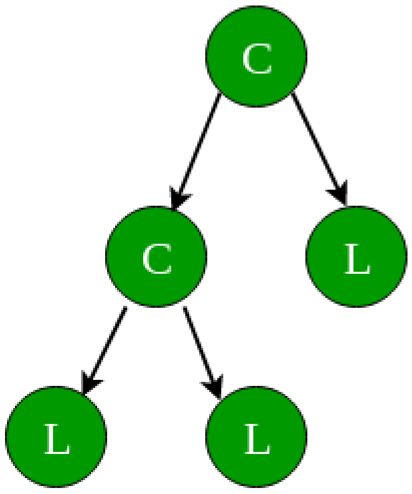
Step 3

Verify the output.

```
Employee :[ Name : John, dept : CEO, salary :30000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Robert, dept : Head Sales, salary :20000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Richard, dept : Sales, salary :10000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Rob, dept : Sales, salary :10000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Michel, dept : Head Marketing, salary :20000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Laura, dept : Marketing, salary :10000 ]
Employee :[ Name : Bob, dept : Marketing, salary :10000 ]
```

The Composite Pattern has four participants:

1. **Component –** Component declares the interface for objects in the composition and for accessing and managing its child components. It also implements default behavior for the interface common to all classes as appropriate.
2. **Leaf –** Leaf defines behavior for primitive objects in the composition. It represents leaf objects in the composition.
3. **Composite –** Composite stores child components and implements child related operations in the component interface.
4. **Client –** Client manipulates the objects in the composition through the component interface.



Where, C = Composite & L = Leaf

When to use Composite Design Pattern?

Composite Pattern should be used when clients need to ignore the difference between compositions of objects and individual objects. If programmers find that they are using multiple objects in the same way, and often have nearly identical code to handle each of them, then composite is a good choice, it is less complex in this situation to treat primitives and composites as homogeneous.

1. Less number of objects reduces the memory usage, and it manages to keep us away from errors related to memory like java.lang.OutOfMemoryError
2. Although creating an object in Java is really fast, we can still reduce the execution time of our program by sharing objects.

When not to use Composite Design Pattern?

1. Composite Design Pattern makes it harder to restrict the type of components of a composite. So it should not be used when you don't want to represent a full or partial hierarchy of objects.
2. Composite Design Pattern can make the design overly general. It makes harder to restrict the components of a composite. Sometimes you want a composite to have only certain components. With Composite, you can't rely on the type system to enforce those constraints for you. Instead, you'll have to use run-time checks.