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IntelliJ IDEA Essentials

Develop better software fast with IntelliJ IDEA

Jarosław Krochmalski

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Preface

The first version of IntelliJ IDEA was released in January 2001. It is a mature, integrated development environment (IDE), designed to help you in the coding process, and supports a large number of different frameworks, tools, and targets. It works with multiple programming languages. It now includes full support for Java 8 and Java EE 7.

The key objective of IntelliJ IDEA is to increase and assist developer productivity. Whether you develop in Java, Scala, or PHP, or make the frontend using HTML and JavaScript, IntelliJ IDEA's smart and relevant suggestions and code completion, on-the-fly code analysis, and respectable refactoring tools will support you in every step.

When you are migrating from NetBeans or Eclipse, you will quickly see that IntelliJ IDEA is different because it *understands the context*. The IDE knows where you are in the editor and reacts accordingly; you will be surprised at how smart IntelliJ IDEA behaves.

This tool is a generic workhorse rather than a strict Java IDE. In this book, you will learn how to make IntelliJ IDEA work for you and get your job done in the most efficient and pleasant way.

What this books covers

Although the book describes the latest version of IntelliJ IDEA - 14, most of the concepts will also work on the previous revision of the IDE.

Chapter 1, Get to Know Your IDE, Fast, is a very concise note on editions comparison, requirements and installing IntelliJ IDEA in Windows, OSX, and Linux. This chapter guides you through the main workspace and show you ways to customize it for different tasks, presenting briefly the most useful plugins, IDE settings, and configuration tips.

Chapter 2, Off We Go – To the Code, describes the process of setting up a new project or importing an existing one. The chapter explains terminology differences with NetBeans and Eclipse and presents the concept of modules and artifacts.

Chapter 3, The Editor, describes the core of IntelliJ IDEA – the editor. In this chapter, you use state-of-the-art code completion, templates, and other great IntelliJ IDEA features. This chapter shows how to set up the editor and gives you some productivity tips.

Chapter 4, Make It Better – Refactoring, presents the powerful refactoring toolset of IntelliJ IDEA. You are guided through the most useful refactoring techniques.

Chapter 5, Make It Happen – Running Your Project, covers configuring the runtime environment for your project. We also talk about adding run configurations, either on the server or standalone. This chapter focusses not only on Java, but on other technologies such as Node.js as well.

Chapter 6, Building Your Project, focusses on building a project. You use IntelliJ IDEA's own build system, and Maven and Gradle integration as well.

Chapter 7, Red or Green? Test Your Code, is all about unit testing in IntelliJ IDEA. We focus on setting IntelliJ IDEA up specifically to run tests. You create JUnit and TestNG run configurations and then run and debug the tests. Then, you are given a brief overview of the test runner windows, useful settings, and option suggestions.

Chapter 8, Squash'em – The Debugger, focusses on the IntelliJ IDEA debugger. You get familiar with the debugger tool window and debugger options. We look under the hood – evaluating expressions, using watches, conditional breakpoints, and other debugger features. We also talk briefly about remote debugging.

Chapter 9, Working with Your Team, This chapter is all about version control, and managing change lists and tasks. There is a brief description on how to set up VCS integration, with the main focus on Git. This chapter describes integration with popular bug trackers, such as JIRA and YouTRACK.

Chapter 10, Not Enough? Extend It, describes briefly the plugin architecture of IntelliJ IDEA. We talk about possibilities and develop a simple plugin, so that you have knowledge of how to extend the IDE. You are also presented with useful links and resources to develop your knowledge even further.

What you need for this book

You will need a Mac or PC, running OS X, MS Windows, or Linux, to be able to set up and run IntelliJ IDEA. To learn the presented features, you will also need the tool itself, of course. You can use the free 30-day trial of Ultimate Edition or use the Community Edition, which is available free of charge. We will flag the differences and let you know what features are not available in the free version of the IDE. You can read how to get it in *Chapter 1, Get to Know Your IDE, Fast*.

Who this book is for

This book is a fast-paced introduction to IntelliJ IDEA and is aimed at users who want to learn the essentials of the new IDE in a nimble and efficient way.

Conventions

In this book, you will find a number of text styles that distinguish between different kinds of information. Here are some examples of these styles and an explanation of their meaning.

Code words in text, database table names, folder names, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, dummy URLs, user input, and Twitter handles are shown as follows: "If you keep getting `OutOfMemoryError` in `PermGen` space exceptions, try to change the `-XX:MaxPermSize` setting."

A block of code is set as follows:

```
private boolean isValid(int a) {
    return a > 15 && a < 100;
}
```

Any command-line input or output is written as follows:

```
git clone git://git.jetbrains.org/idea/community.git idea
```

New terms and **important words** are shown in bold. Words that you see on the screen, for example, in menus or dialog boxes, appear in the text like this: "To do this, first download the IntelliJ Configuration Server plugin, using the Plugins page of the **Settings** dialog box."

 Warnings or important notes appear in a box like this.

 Tips and tricks appear like this.

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1

Get to Know Your IDE, Fast

In this chapter, we will compare IntelliJ IDEA editions and licenses, install the tool, and quickly introduce the main workspace. IntelliJ IDEA comes with many settings; it is not possible to cover all of them in one book so we will focus on the most important ones. We will cover the following topics in this chapter:

- Comparing the various editions
- Installing the tool
- Workspace overview
- IDE settings
- Configuration tips and tricks

Comparing the various editions

IntelliJ IDEA is available as a free Community Edition and full-fledged Ultimate Edition. From the licensing point of view, the good thing is you can use both editions to develop the software you want to sell. It is worth mentioning that the new Android Studio that is used for the development of mobile Android applications is also based on IntelliJ IDEA.

The detailed comparison table can be found on the JetBrains website: http://www.jetbrains.com/idea/features/editions_comparison_matrix.html. To cut a long story short, there are many features missing in the Community Edition, but there are some workarounds available if you look close enough. For example, when you want to use Tomcat or Jetty servers in the Community Edition, you can use Maven plugins to run and debug your web applications freely. We will discuss this in *Chapter 5, Make It Happen – Running Your Project*.

You can use the Community Edition to develop applications using many frameworks such as Play, Struts, or Spring. It's all Java, after all. The IDE will not assist you in that. Most of the configuration hints, warnings, autocompletion, and runtime configuration features will be unavailable.

The Ultimate Edition, on the other hand, is the full-featured commercial IDE. You have the full support of almost all of the modern frameworks and application servers. The IDE will assist you by providing code completion, hints, and diagrams. The language support in this edition is also more comprehensive; you will get HTML and scripting languages analysis available on the fly, for example.

Apart from the provided features, the Ultimate Edition can be categorized based on the license. Depending on your needs, you can purchase any of the following licenses:

- **Commercial license:** IntelliJ IDEA can be used by any developer in your company but the total number of concurrent users cannot exceed the number of purchased licenses.
- **Personal license:** IntelliJ IDEA can be used only by the person who purchased it. You can use it on as many computers as you own, as long as you are the only user. The Personal license, of course, can also be used to develop commercial products.

Additionally, there are some licensing options and discounts based on the target audience, for startups, students, and teachers, for education or training, and finally, for open source projects.

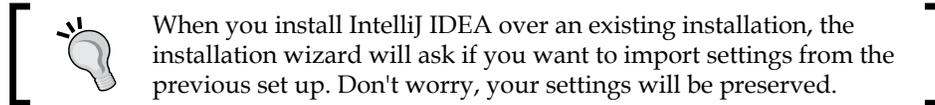
 When you decide to buy the Ultimate Edition, sometimes it is wise to wait till the holidays, for example, Christmas or Easter. The JetBrains team usually provides some discounts on their products then.

Installing IntelliJ IDEA

Installing IntelliJ IDEA is straightforward. Perform the following steps:

1. Go to <http://www.jetbrains.com/idea/download/>.
2. Pick the OS version and edition of your choice.

3. After opening the downloaded installation package in MS Windows, you should see the installation wizard. In Mac OS, double-click on the downloaded .dmg file and then just drag IntelliJ IDEA to the Applications folder.



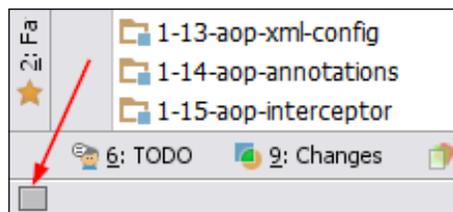
During the first startup, IntelliJ IDEA will ask you which plugins should be enabled by default. Usually, it's best to enable only what you need, so the IDE loads and works faster with fewer plugins enabled. Don't worry if you don't know what to select; you can always change your mind later by editing the IDE settings. On the first startup, you will not be able to see the workspace without the project opened. While we will go through the details of creating the project in the next chapter, you can now just create the basic Java project by choosing **New Project** from the **File** menu, selecting **Java**, and proceeding with the **New Project** wizard by clicking on **Next** a couple of times.

An overview of the workspace

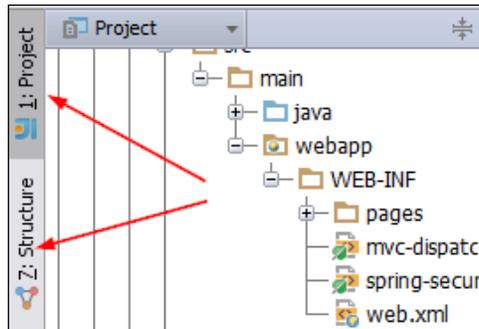
Basically, the workspace in IntelliJ IDEA consists of the main editor with tabs, menus, and many tool windows.

Tool windows

The tool windows are hidden, by default, in Version 13 and later of IDEA. You can toggle them on and off using the button in the bottom-left corner of the screen:



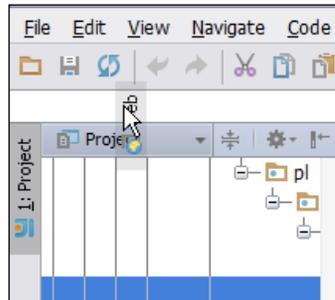
Tool windows are those little "tabs" visible at the edges of the workspace. These edges are called tool window bars, as shown in the following screenshot:



Some of the tool windows are always available, such as **Project** or **Structure**, while some of them are available only when the corresponding plugins are enabled.

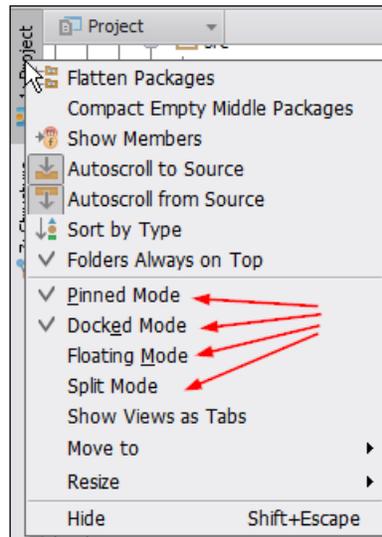
You can arrange the order of the tool windows by dragging them with your mouse. You can drag the tool window to other screen edges as well.

There's a fourth tool window bar available at the top of the screen, which is hidden. Just drag any tool window to the top of your workspace to use it, as shown in the following screenshot:



View modes in tool windows

The tool windows have a context menu available when you right-click on them. The context menu contains items specific to a particular tool window and some possible view modes, as shown in the following screenshot:



Pinned Mode

The pinned tool window will stay open even when it becomes inactive by losing focus. You may prefer to have the **Project** tool window pinned to have a constant overview of the project structure. Only docked windows can be pinned. On the other hand, you can keep the project view closed almost all the time and simply use the keyboard shortcuts to navigate. On large projects, this approach is much faster than searching the tree manually for your file.

Docked Mode

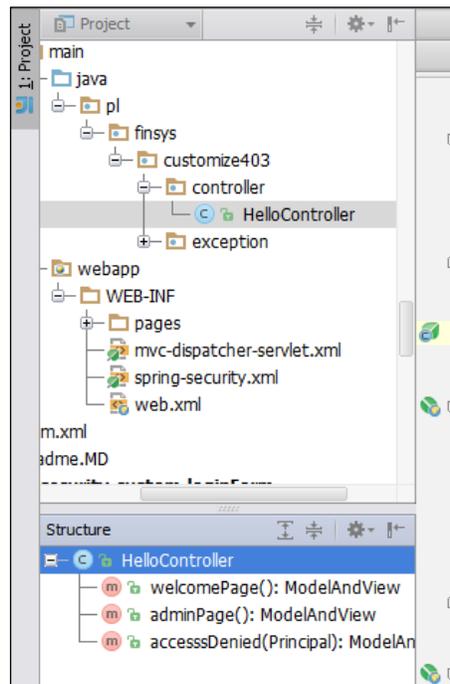
When docked, the tool window will share the total workspace area with other workspace elements such as the editor. On the other hand, when undocked, the tool window will overlap the other workspace elements when resized. An undocked window will go away if inactive. For example, it is especially useful to have the console tool window undocked and resized; reading huge logfiles or console output will be a lot easier.

Floating Mode

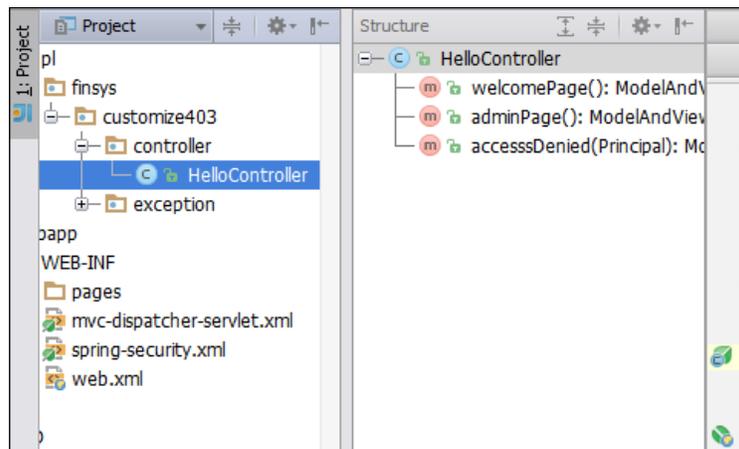
Floating, as the name suggests, allows the tool window to float over the workspace and be detached from the screen edges. It may be useful when you work on multimonitor environments with huge display resolutions set. There are no limiting factors for the number of floating windows shown simultaneously. When floating, tool windows can be easily arranged to suit your needs.

Split Mode

The tool window will share the tool window bar with other tool windows when it has **Split Mode** enabled. This gives you the ability to see two tool windows at once. It's nice to see the project structure and file structure at the same time, as shown in the following screenshot:



When you use the *Ctrl* + left-click (PC) or *cmd* + left-click (Mac) keyboard shortcuts, the splitter between the two tool windows is displayed at once; IntelliJ IDEA will switch them to the wide screen mode and display them in a horizontal layout. It is priceless when you work on a fancy panoramic display and would like to use the screen space effectively, as shown in the following screenshot:



You can quickly go to the specific tool window by using the mnemonic shortcut displayed before its name, for example, *Alt + 1* (PC) or *cmd + 1* (MAC) will take you to the **Project** tool window. It works for hidden tool windows, too.

Multiple views in tool windows

Some tool windows have more than one view available. For example, the **Project** tool window can show **Project**, **Packages**, or **Problems**, as shown in the following screenshot:

