

Chapter 8

Code and XAML in harmony

A code file and a XAML file always exist as a pair. The two files complement each other. Despite being referred to as the “code-behind” file to the XAML, very often the code is prominent in taking on the more active and interactive parts of the application. This implies that the code-behind file must be able to refer to elements defined in XAML with as much ease as objects instantiated in code. Likewise, elements in XAML must be able to fire events that are handled in code-based event handlers. That’s what this chapter is all about.

But first, let’s explore a couple of unusual techniques for instantiating objects in a XAML file.

Passing arguments

When you run an application containing a XAML file, each element in the XAML file is instantiated with a call to the parameterless constructor of the corresponding class or structure. The load process continues with initialization of the resultant object by setting properties from attribute values. This seems reasonable. However, developers using XAML sometimes have a need to instantiate objects with constructors that require arguments or by calling a static creation method. These needs usually don’t involve the API itself, but instead involve external data classes referenced by the XAML file that interact with the API.

The 2009 XAML specification introduced an `x:Arguments` element and an `x:FactoryMethod` attribute for these cases, and `Xamarin.Forms` supports them. These techniques are not often used in ordinary circumstances, but you should see how they work in case the need arises.

Constructors with arguments

To pass arguments to a constructor of an element in XAML, the element must be separated into start and end tags. Follow the start tag of the element with `x:Arguments` start and end tags. Within those `x:Arguments` tags, include one or more constructor arguments.

But how do you specify multiple arguments of common types, such as `double` or `int`? Do you separate the arguments with commas?

No. Each argument must be delimited with start and end tags. Fortunately, the XAML 2009 specification defines XML elements for common basic types. You can use these tags to clarify the types of elements, to specify generic types in `OnPlatform`, or to delimit constructor arguments. Here’s the complete set supported by `Xamarin.Forms`. Notice that they duplicate the .NET type names rather than the C# type names:

- `x:Object`
- `x:Boolean`
- `x:Byte`
- `x:Int16`
- `x:Int32`
- `x:Int64`
- `x:Single`
- `x:Double`
- `x:Decimal`
- `x:Char`
- `x:String`
- `x:TimeSpan`
- `x:Array`
- `x:DateTime` (supported by `Xamarin.Forms` but not the XAML 2009 specification)

You'll be hard-pressed to find a use for all of these, but you'll certainly discover uses for some of them.

The **ParameteredConstructorDemo** sample demonstrates the use of `x:Arguments` with arguments delimited by `x:Double` tags using three different constructors of the `Color` structure. The constructor with three parameters requires red, green, and blue values ranging from 0 to 1. The constructor with four parameters adds an alpha channel as the fourth parameter (which is set here to 0.5), and the constructor with a single parameter indicates a gray shade from 0 (black) to 1 (white):

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="ParameteredConstructorDemo.ParameteredConstructorDemoPage">

    <StackLayout>
        <BoxView WidthRequest="100"
                 HeightRequest="100"
                 HorizontalOptions="Center"
                 VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
            <BoxView.Color>
                <Color>
                    <x:Arguments>
                        <x:Double>1</x:Double>
                        <x:Double>0</x:Double>
                        <x:Double>0</x:Double>
                    </x:Arguments>
                </Color>
            </BoxView.Color>
        </BoxView>
    </StackLayout>
</ContentPage>
```

```

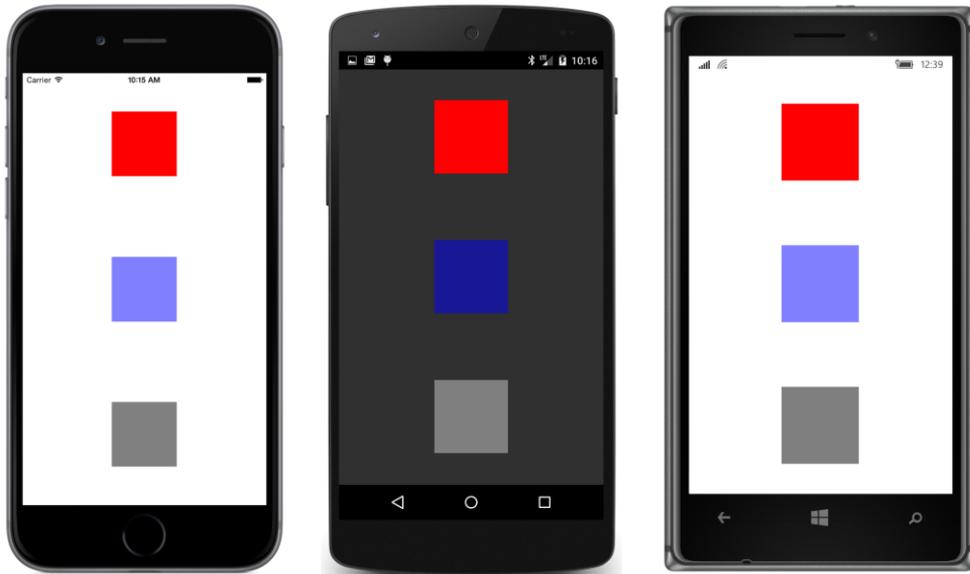
        </BoxView.Color>
    </BoxView>

    <BoxView WidthRequest="100"
            HeightRequest="100"
            HorizontalOptions="Center"
            VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <BoxView.Color>
            <Color>
                <x:Arguments>
                    <x:Double>0</x:Double>
                    <x:Double>0</x:Double>
                    <x:Double>1</x:Double>
                    <x:Double>0.5</x:Double>
                </x:Arguments>
            </Color>
        </BoxView.Color>
    </BoxView>

    <BoxView WidthRequest="100"
            HeightRequest="100"
            HorizontalOptions="Center"
            VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
        <BoxView.Color>
            <Color>
                <x:Arguments>
                    <x:Double>0.5</x:Double>
                </x:Arguments>
            </Color>
        </BoxView.Color>
    </BoxView>
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

The number of elements within the `x:Arguments` tags, and the types of these elements, must match one of the constructors of the class or structure. Here's the result:



The blue `BoxView` is light against the light background and dark against the dark background because it's 50 percent transparent and lets the background show through.

Can I call methods from XAML?

At one time, the answer to this question was "Don't be ridiculous," but now it's a qualified "Yes." Don't get too excited, though. The only methods you can call in XAML are those that return objects (or values) of the same type as the class (or structure) that defines the method. These methods must be public and static. They are sometimes called *creation methods* or *factory methods*. You can instantiate an element in XAML through a call to one of these methods by specifying the method's name using the `x:FactoryMethod` attribute and its arguments using the `x:Arguments` element.

The `Color` structure defines seven static methods that return `Color` values, so these qualify. This XAML file makes use of three of them:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
  xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
  x:Class="FactoryMethodDemo.FactoryMethodDemoPage">

  <StackLayout>
    <BoxView WidthRequest="100"
      HeightRequest="100"
      HorizontalOptions="Center"
      VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
      <BoxView.Color>
        <Color x:FactoryMethod="FromRgb">
          <x:Arguments>
            <x:Int32>255</x:Int32>
            <x:Int32>0</x:Int32>
```

```

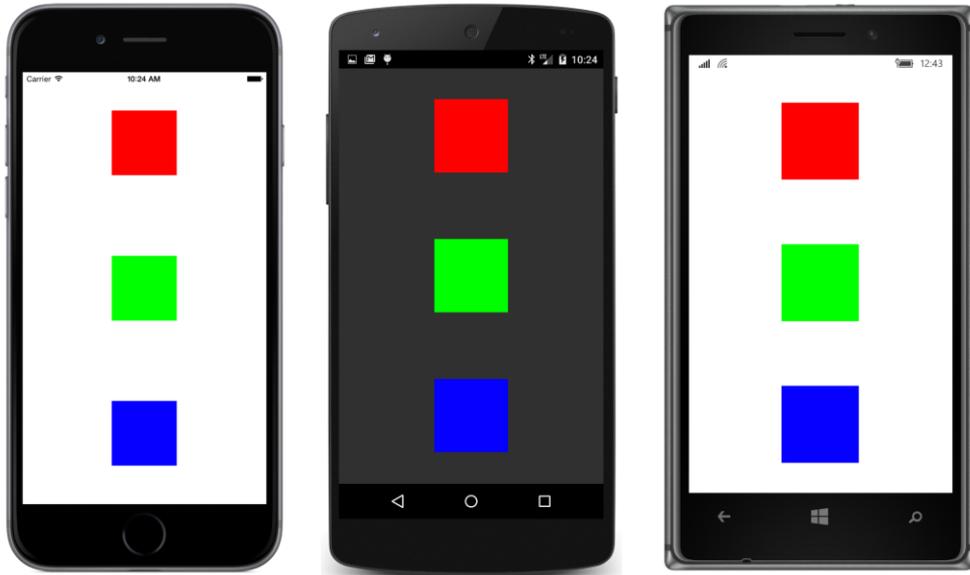
        <x:Int32>0</x:Int32>
    </x:Arguments>
</Color>
</BoxView.Color>
</BoxView>

<BoxView WidthRequest="100"
    HeightRequest="100"
    HorizontalOptions="Center"
    VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
    <BoxView.Color>
        <Color x:FactoryMethod="FromRgb">
            <x:Arguments>
                <x:Double>0</x:Double>
                <x:Double>1.0</x:Double>
                <x:Double>0</x:Double>
            </x:Arguments>
        </Color>
    </BoxView.Color>
</BoxView>

<BoxView WidthRequest="100"
    HeightRequest="100"
    HorizontalOptions="Center"
    VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand">
    <BoxView.Color>
        <Color x:FactoryMethod="FromHsla">
            <x:Arguments>
                <x:Double>0.67</x:Double>
                <x:Double>1.0</x:Double>
                <x:Double>0.5</x:Double>
                <x:Double>1.0</x:Double>
            </x:Arguments>
        </Color>
    </BoxView.Color>
</BoxView>
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

The first two static methods invoked here are both named `Color.FromRgb`, but the types of elements within the `x:Arguments` tags distinguish between `int` arguments that range from 0 to 255 and `double` arguments that range from 0 to 1. The third one is the `Color.FromHsla` method, which creates a `Color` value from hue, saturation, luminosity, and alpha components. Interestingly, this is the only way to define a `Color` value from HSL values in a XAML file by using the Xamarin.Forms API. Here's the result:



The x:Name attribute

In most real applications, the code-behind file needs to reference elements defined in the XAML file. You saw one way to do this in the **CodePlusXaml** program in the previous chapter: If the code-behind file has knowledge of the layout of the visual tree defined in the XAML file, it can start from the root element (the page itself) and locate specific elements within the tree. This process is called “walking the tree” and can be useful for locating particular elements on a page.

Generally, a better approach is to give elements in the XAML file a name similar to a variable name. To do this you use an attribute that is intrinsic to XAML, called *Name*. Because the prefix *x* is almost universally used for attributes intrinsic to XAML, this *Name* attribute is commonly referred to as *x:Name*.

The **XamlClock** project demonstrates the use of *x:Name*. Here is the `XamlClockPage.xaml` file containing two `Label` controls, named `timeLabel` and `dateLabel`:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="XamlClock.XamlClockPage">
    <StackLayout>
        <Label x:Name="timeLabel"
              FontSize="Large"
              HorizontalOptions="Center"
              VerticalOptions="EndAndExpand" />

        <Label x:Name="dateLabel"
              HorizontalOptions="Center"
              VerticalOptions="StartAndExpand" />
    </StackLayout>
</ContentPage>
```

```
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>
```

The rules for `x:Name` are the same as for C# variable names. (You'll see why shortly.) The name must begin with a letter or an underscore and can contain only letters, underscores, and numbers.

Like the clock program in Chapter 5, **XamlClock** uses `Device.StartTimer` to fire a periodic event for updating the time and date. Here's the `XamlClockPage` code-behind file:

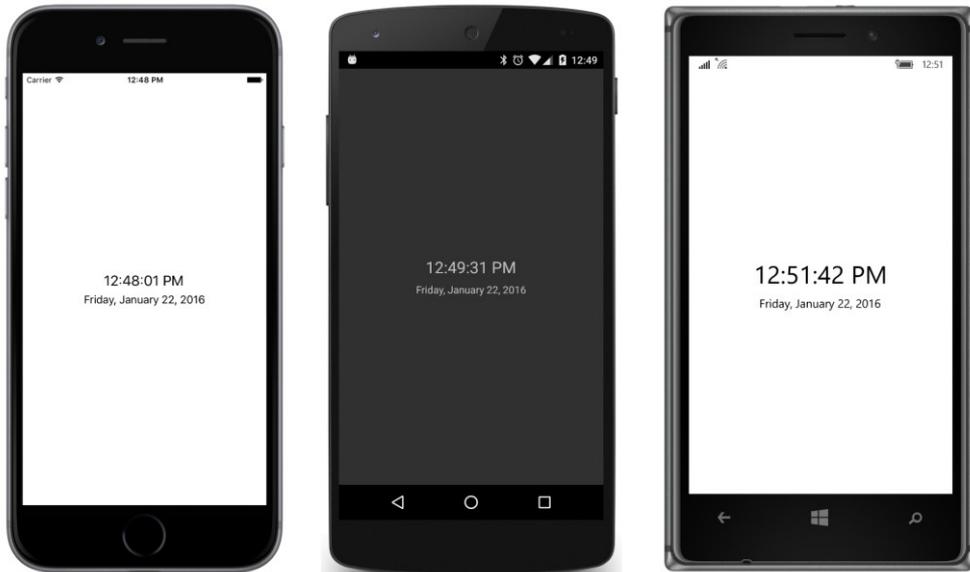
```
namespace XamlClock
{
    public partial class XamlClockPage
    {
        public XamlClockPage()
        {
            InitializeComponent();

            Device.StartTimer(TimeSpan.FromSeconds(1), OnTimerTick);
        }

        bool OnTimerTick()
        {
            DateTime dt = DateTime.Now;
            timeLabel.Text = dt.ToString("T");
            dateLabel.Text = dt.ToString("D");
            return true;
        }
    }
}
```

This timer callback method is called once per second. The method must return `true` to continue the timer. If it returns `false`, the timer stops and must be restarted with another call to `Device.StartTimer`.

The callback method references `timeLabel` and `dateLabel` as though they were normal variables and sets the `Text` properties of each:



This is not a visually impressive clock, but it's definitely functional.

How is it that the code-behind file can reference the elements identified with `x:Name`? Is it magic? Of course not. The mechanism is very evident when you examine the `XamlClockPage.xaml.g.cs` file that the XAML parser generates from the XAML file as the project is being built:

```
//-----
// <auto-generated>
//   This code was generated by a tool.
//   Runtime Version:4.0.30319.42000
//
//   Changes to this file may cause incorrect behavior and will be lost if
//   the code is regenerated.
// </auto-generated>
//-----

namespace XamlClock {
    using System;
    using Xamarin.Forms;
    using Xamarin.Forms.Xaml;

    public partial class XamlClockPage : global::Xamarin.Forms.ContentPage {

        [System.CodeDom.Compiler.GeneratedCodeAttribute("Xamarin.Forms.Build.Tasks.XamlG",
            "0.0.0.0")]
        private global::Xamarin.Forms.Label timeLabel;

        [System.CodeDom.Compiler.GeneratedCodeAttribute("Xamarin.Forms.Build.Tasks.XamlG",
            "0.0.0.0")]
        private global::Xamarin.Forms.Label dateLabel;
    }
}
```

```

[System.CodeDom.Compiler.GeneratedCodeAttribute("Xamarin.Forms.Build.Tasks.XamlIG",
                                                "0.0.0.0")]
private void InitializeComponent() {
    this.LoadFromXaml(typeof(XamlClockPage));
    timeLabel = this.FindByName<global::Xamarin.Forms.Label>("timeLabel");
    dateLabel = this.FindByName<global::Xamarin.Forms.Label>("dateLabel");
}
}
}

```

It might be a little hard to see because of the attributes and fully qualified types, but as the build-time XAML parser chews through the XAML file, every `x:Name` attribute becomes a private field in this generated code file. This allows code in the code-behind file to reference these names as though they were normal fields—which they definitely are. However, the fields are initially `null`. Only when `InitializeComponent` is called at run time are the two fields set via the `FindByName` method, which is defined in the `NameScopeExtensions` class. If the constructor of your code-behind file tries to reference these two fields prior to the `InitializeComponent` call, they will have `null` values.

This generated code file also implies another rule for `x:Name` values that is now very obvious but rarely stated explicitly: the names cannot duplicate names of fields or properties defined in the code-behind file.

Because these are private fields, they can be accessed only from the code-behind file and not from other classes. If a `ContentPage` derivative needs to expose public fields or properties to other classes, you must define those yourself.

Obviously, `x:Name` values must be unique within a XAML page. This can sometimes be a problem if you're using `OnPlatform` for platform-specific elements in the XAML file. For example, here's a XAML file that expresses the `iOS`, `Android`, and `WinPhone` properties of `OnPlatform` as property elements to select one of three `Label` views:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="PlatformSpecificLabels.PlatformSpecificLabelsPage">

    <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="View">
        <OnPlatform.iOS>
            <Label Text="This is an iOS device"
                  HorizontalOptions="Center"
                  VerticalOptions="Center" />
        </OnPlatform.iOS>

        <OnPlatform.Android>
            <Label Text="This is an Android device"
                  HorizontalOptions="Center"
                  VerticalOptions="Center" />
        </OnPlatform.Android>

        <OnPlatform.WinPhone>
            <Label Text="This is an Windows device"

```

```

        HorizontalOptions="Center"
        VerticalOptions="Center" />
    </OnPlatform.WinPhone>
</OnPlatform>
</ContentPage>

```

The `x:TypeArguments` attribute of `OnPlatform` must match the type of the target property exactly. This `OnPlatform` element is implicitly being set to the `Content` property of `ContentPage`, and this `Content` property is of type `View`, so the `x:TypeArguments` attribute of `OnPlatform` must specify `View`. However, the properties of `OnPlatform` can be set to any class that derives from that type. The objects set to the `iOS`, `Android`, and `WinPhone` properties can in fact be different types just as long as they all derive from `View`.

Although that XAML file works, it's not exactly optimum. All three `Label` views are instantiated and initialized, but only one is set to the `Content` property of the `ContentPage`. The problem with this approach arises if you need to refer to the `Label` from the code-behind file and you give each of them the same name, like so:

The following XAML file does not work!

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="PlatformSpecificLabels.PlatformSpecificLabelsPage">

    <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="View">
        <OnPlatform.iOS>
            <Label x:Name="deviceLabel"
                  Text="This is an iOS device"
                  HorizontalOptions="Center"
                  VerticalOptions="Center" />
        </OnPlatform.iOS>

        <OnPlatform.Android>
            <Label x:Name="deviceLabel"
                  Text="This is an Android device"
                  HorizontalOptions="Center"
                  VerticalOptions="Center" />
        </OnPlatform.Android>

        <OnPlatform.WinPhone>
            <Label x:Name="deviceLabel"
                  Text="This is a Windows device"
                  HorizontalOptions="Center"
                  VerticalOptions="Center" />
        </OnPlatform.WinPhone>
    </OnPlatform>
</ContentPage>

```

This will not work because multiple elements cannot have the same name.

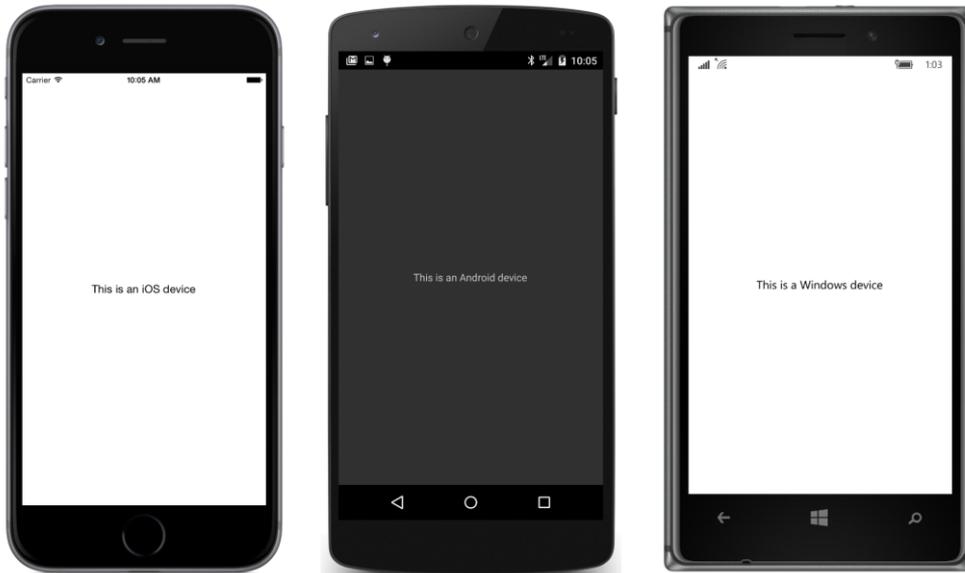
You could give them different names and handle the three names in the code-behind file by using

`Device.OnPlatform`, but a better solution is to keep the platform-specific markup as small as possible. In this example, all the `Label` properties are the same except for `Text`, so only the `Text` property needs to be platform specific. Here's the version of the **PlatformSpecificLabels** program that is included with the sample code for this chapter. It has a single `Label`, and everything is platform independent except for the `Text` property:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="PlatformSpecificLabels.PlatformSpecificLabelsPage">

    <Label x:Name="deviceLabel"
           HorizontalOptions="Center"
           VerticalOptions="Center">
        <Label.Text>
            <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="x:String"
                       iOS="This is an iOS device"
                       Android="This is an Android device"
                       WinPhone="This is a Windows device" />
        </Label.Text>
    </Label>
</ContentPage>
```

Here's what it looks like:



The `Text` property is the content property for `Label`, so you don't need the `Label.Text` tags in the previous example. This works as well:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="PlatformSpecificLabels.PlatformSpecificLabelsPage">
```

```

<Label x:Name="deviceLabel"
      HorizontalOptions="Center"
      VerticalOptions="Center">
  <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="x:String"
            iOS="This is an iOS device"
            Android="This is an Android device"
            WinPhone="This is a Windows device" />
</Label>
</ContentPage>

```

Custom XAML-based views

The **ScaryColorList** program in the previous chapter listed a few colors in a `StackLayout` using `Frame`, `BoxView`, and `Label`. Even with just three colors, the repetitive markup was starting to look very ominous. Unfortunately there is no XAML markup that duplicates the C# `for` and `while` loops, so your choice is to use code for generating multiple similar items, or to find a better way to do it in markup.

In this book, you'll see several ways to list colors in XAML, and eventually, a very clean and elegant way to do this job will become clear. But that requires a few more steps into learning `Xamarin.Forms`. Until then, we'll be looking at some other approaches that you might find useful in similar circumstances.

One strategy is to create a custom view that has the sole purpose of displaying a color with a name and a colored box. And while we're at it, let's display the hexadecimal RGB values of the colors as well. You can then use that custom view in a XAML page file for the individual colors.

What might a reference to such a custom view look like in XAML?

Or the better question is: How would you *like* it to look?

If the markup looked something like this, the repetition is not bad at all, and not so much worse than explicitly defining an array of `Color` values in code:

```

<StackLayout>
  <MyColorView Color="Red" />
  <MyColorView Color="Green" />
  <MyColorView Color="Blue" />
  ...
</StackLayout>

```

Well, actually, it won't look exactly like that. `MyColorView` is obviously a custom class and not part of the `Xamarin.Forms` API. Therefore, it cannot appear in the XAML file without a namespace prefix that is defined in an XML namespace declaration.

With this XML prefix applied, there won't be any confusion about this custom view being part of the `Xamarin.Forms` API, so let's give it a more dignified name of `ColorView` rather than `MyColorView`.

This hypothetical `ColorView` class is an example of a fairly easy custom view because it consists solely of existing views—specifically `Label`, `Frame`, and `BoxView`—arranged in a particular way using `StackLayout`. Xamarin.Forms defines a view designed specifically for the purpose of parenting such an arrangement of views, and it's called `ContentView`. Like `ContentPage`, `ContentView` has a `Content` property that you can set to a visual tree of other views. You can define the contents of the `ContentView` in code, but it's more fun to do it in XAML.

Let's put together a solution named **ColorViewList**. This solution will have two sets of XAML and code-behind files, the first for a class named `ColorViewListPage`, which derives from `ContentPage` (as usual), and the second for a class named `ColorView`, which derives from `ContentView`.

To create the `ColorView` class in Visual Studio, use the same procedure as when adding a new XAML page to the **ColorViewList** project: Right-click the project name in the **Solution Explorer**, and select **Add > New Item** from the context menu. In the **Add New Item** dialog, select **Visual C# > Cross-Platform** at the left and then **Forms Xaml Page**. Enter the name `ColorView.cs`. But right away, before you forget, go into the `ColorView.xaml` file and change the `ContentPage` start and end tags to `ContentView`. In the `ColorView.xaml.cs` file, change the base class to `ContentView`.

The process is a little easier in Xamarin Studio. From the tool menu for the **ColorViewList** project, select **Add > New File**. In the **New File** dialog, select **Forms** at the left and **Forms ContentView Xaml** (not **Forms ContentPage Xaml**). Give it a name of `ColorView`.

You'll also need to create a XAML file and code-behind file for the `ColorViewListPage` class, as usual.

The `ColorView.xaml` file describes the layout of the individual color items but without any actual color values. Instead, the `BoxView` and two `Label` views are given names:

```
<ContentView xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="ColorViewList.ColorView">

    <Frame OutlineColor="Accent">
        <StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal">
            <BoxView x:Name="boxView"
                    WidthRequest="70"
                    HeightRequest="70" />

            <StackLayout>
                <Label x:Name="colorNameLabel"
                       FontSize="Large"
                       VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand" />

                <Label x:Name="colorValueLabel"
                       VerticalOptions="CenterAndExpand" />
            </StackLayout>
        </StackLayout>
    </Frame>
</ContentView>
```

In a real-life program, you'll have plenty of time later to fine-tune the visuals. Initially, you'll just want to get all the named views in there.

Besides the visuals, this `ColorView` class will need a new property to set the color. This property must be defined in the code-behind file. At first, it seems reasonable to give `ColorView` a property named `Color` of type `Color` (as the earlier XAML snippet with `MyColorView` seems to suggest). But the `ColorView` class needs to display the color *name*, and it can't get the color name from a `Color` value.

Instead, it makes more sense to define a property named `ColorName` of type `string`. The code-behind file can then use reflection to obtain the static field of the `Color` class corresponding to that name.

But wait: `Xamarin.Forms` includes a public `ColorTypeConverter` class that the XAML parser uses to convert a text color name like "Red" or "Blue" into a `Color` value. Why not take advantage of that?

Here's the code-behind file for `ColorView`. It defines a `ColorName` property with a set accessor that sets the `Text` property of the `colorNameLabel` to the color name, and then uses `ColorTypeConverter` to convert the name to a `Color` value. This `Color` value is then used to set the `Color` property of `boxView` and the `Text` property of the `colorValueLabel` to the RGB values:

```
public partial class ColorView : ContentView
{
    string colorName;
    ColorTypeConverter colorTypeConv = new ColorTypeConverter();

    public ColorView()
    {
        InitializeComponent();
    }

    public string ColorName
    {
        set
        {
            // Set the name.
            colorName = value;
            colorNameLabel.Text = value;

            // Get the actual Color and set the other views.
            Color color = (Color)colorTypeConv.ConvertFrom(colorName);
            boxView.Color = color;
            colorValueLabel.Text = String.Format("{0:X2}-{1:X2}-{2:X2}",
                                                (int)(255 * color.R),
                                                (int)(255 * color.G),
                                                (int)(255 * color.B));
        }
        get
        {
            return colorName;
        }
    }
}
```

```

    }
}

```

The `ColorView` class is finished. Now let's look at `ColorViewListPage`. The `ColorViewListPage.xaml` file must list multiple `ColorView` instances, so it needs a new XML namespace declaration with a new namespace prefix to reference the `ColorView` element.

The `ColorView` class is part of the same project as `ColorViewListPage`. Generally, programmers use an XML namespace prefix of `local` for such cases. The new namespace declaration appears in the root element of the XAML file (like the other two) with the following format:

```
xmlns:local="clr-namespace:ColorViewList;assembly=ColorViewList"
```

In the general case, a custom XML namespace declaration for XAML must specify a common language runtime (CLR) namespace—also known as the .NET namespace—and an assembly. The keywords to specify these are `clr-namespace` and `assembly`. Often the CLR namespace is the same as the assembly, as they are in this case, but they don't need to be. The two parts are connected by a semicolon.

Notice that a colon follows `clr-namespace`, but an equal sign follows `assembly`. This apparent inconsistency is deliberate: the format of the namespace declaration is intended to mimic a URI found in conventional namespace declarations, in which a colon follows the URI scheme name.

You use the same syntax for referencing objects in external portable class libraries. The only difference in those cases is that the project also needs a reference to that external PCL. (You'll see an example in Chapter 10, "XAML markup extensions.")

The `local` prefix is common for code in the same assembly, and in that case the `assembly` part is not required:

```
xmlns:local="clr-namespace:ColorViewList"
```

For a XAML file in a PCL, you can include the `assembly` part to reference something in the same assembly if you want but it's not necessary. For a XAML file in an SAP, however, you must *not* include the `assembly` part to reference a local class because there is no assembly associated with an SAP. The code in the SAP is actually part of the individual platform assemblies, and those all have different names.

Here's the XAML for the `ColorViewListPage` class. The code-behind file contains nothing beyond the `InitializeComponent` call:

```

<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             xmlns:local="clr-namespace:ColorViewList"
             x:Class="ColorViewList.ColorViewListPage">

    <ContentPage.Padding>
        <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="Thickness"
                    iOS="0, 20, 0, 0" />
    </ContentPage.Padding>

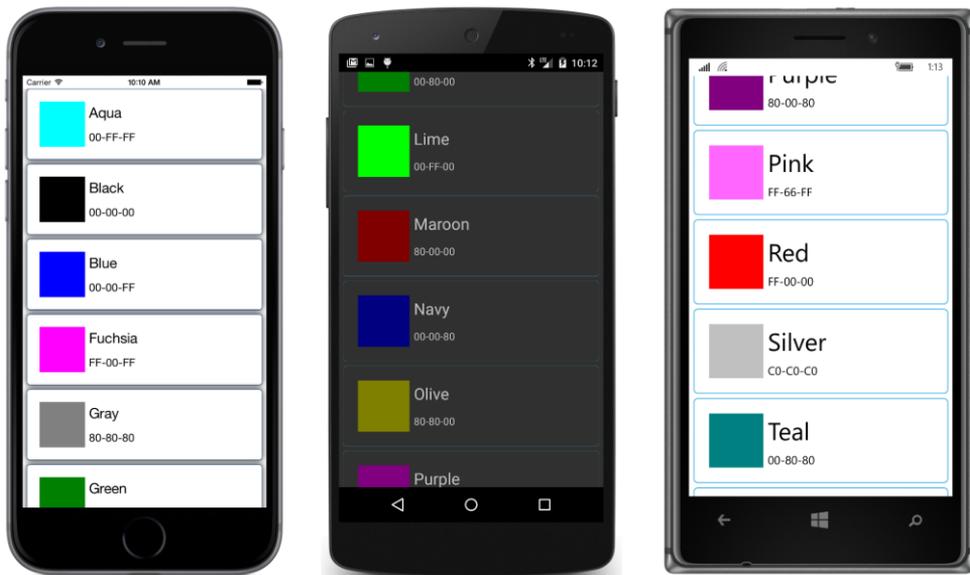
```

```

<ScrollView>
  <StackLayout Padding="6, 0">
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Aqua" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Black" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Blue" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Fuchsia" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Gray" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Green" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Lime" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Maroon" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Navy" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Olive" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Purple" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Pink" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Red" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Silver" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Teal" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="White" />
    <local:ColorView ColorName="Yellow" />
  </StackLayout>
</ScrollView>
</ContentPage>

```

This is not quite as odious as the earlier example seemed to suggest, and it demonstrates how you can encapsulate visuals in their own XAML-based classes. Notice that the `StackLayout` is the child of a `ScrollView`, so the list can be scrolled:



However, there is one aspect of the **ColorViewList** project that does not qualify as a “best practice.” It is the definition of the `ColorName` property in `ColorView`. This should really be implemented as a

`BindableProperty` object. Delving into bindable objects and bindable properties is a high priority and will be explored in Chapter 11, “The bindable infrastructure.”

Events and handlers

When you tap a `Xamarin.Forms.Button`, it fires a `Clicked` event. You can instantiate a `Button` in XAML, but the `Clicked` event handler itself must reside in the code-behind file. The `Button` is only one of a bunch of views that exist primarily to generate events, so the process of handling events is crucial to coordinating XAML and code files.

Attaching an event handler to an event in XAML is as simple as setting a property; it is, in fact, visually indistinguishable from a property setting. The **XamlKeypad** project is a XAML version of the **PersistentKeypad** project from Chapter 6. It illustrates setting event handlers in XAML and handling these events in the code-behind file. It also includes logic to save keypad entries when the program is terminated.

If you take a look back at the constructor code of the `SimplestKeypadPage` or `PersistentKeypadPage` classes, you’ll see a couple of loops to create the buttons that make up the numeric part of the keypad. Of course, this is precisely the type of thing you can’t do in XAML, but look at how much cleaner the markup in `XamlKeypadPage` is when compared with that code:

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
             xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
             x:Class="XamlKeypad.XamlKeypadPage">

    <StackLayout VerticalOptions="Center"
                HorizontalOptions="Center">

        <Label x:Name="displayLabel"
              Font="Large"
              VerticalOptions="Center"
              HorizontalTextAlignment="End" />

        <Button x:Name="backspaceButton"
              Text="&#x21E6;"
              Font="Large"
              IsEnabled="False"
              Clicked="OnBackspaceButtonClicked" />

        <StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal">
            <Button Text="7" StyleId="7" Font="Large"
                  Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
            <Button Text="8" StyleId="8" Font="Large"
                  Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
            <Button Text="9" StyleId="9" Font="Large"
                  Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
        </StackLayout>
    </StackLayout>
</ContentPage>
```

```

<StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal">
  <Button Text="4" StyleId="4" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
  <Button Text="5" StyleId="5" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
  <Button Text="6" StyleId="6" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
</StackLayout>

<StackLayout Orientation="Horizontal">
  <Button Text="1" StyleId="1" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
  <Button Text="2" StyleId="2" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
  <Button Text="3" StyleId="3" Font="Large"
    Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />
</StackLayout>

<Button Text="0" StyleId="0" Font="Large"
  Clicked="OnDigitButtonClicked" />

</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

The file is a lot shorter than it would have been had the three properties on each numeric `Button` been formatted into three lines, but packing these all together makes the uniformity of the markup very obvious and provides clarity rather than obscurity.

The big question is this: Which would you rather maintain and modify? The code in the `SimplestKeypadPage` or `PersistentKeypadPage` constructors or the markup in the `XamlKeypadPage` XAML file?

Here's the screenshot. You'll see that these keys are now arranged in calculator order rather than telephone order:



The backspace button has its `Clicked` event set to the `OnBackspaceButtonClicked` handler, while the digit buttons share the `OnDigitButtonClicked` handler. As you'll recall, the `StyleId` property is often used to distinguish views sharing the same event handler, which means that the two event handlers can be implemented in the code-behind file exactly the same as in the code-only program:

```
public partial class XamlKeypadPage
{
    App app = Application.Current as App;

    public XamlKeypadPage()
    {
        InitializeComponent();

        displayLabel.Text = app.DisplayLabelText;
        backspaceButton.IsEnabled = displayLabel.Text != null &&
            displayLabel.Text.Length > 0;
    }

    void OnDigitButtonClicked(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        Button button = (Button)sender;
        displayLabel.Text += (string)button.StyleId;
        backspaceButton.IsEnabled = true;

        app.DisplayLabelText = displayLabel.Text;
    }

    void OnBackspaceButtonClicked(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        string text = displayLabel.Text;
        displayLabel.Text = text.Substring(0, text.Length - 1);
    }
}
```

```

        backspaceButton.IsEnabled = displayLabel.Text.Length > 0;
        app.DisplayLabelText = displayLabel.Text;
    }
}

```

Part of the job of the `LoadFromXaml` method called by `InitializeComponent` involves attaching these event handlers to the objects instantiated from the XAML file.

The **XamlKeypad** project also includes the code that was added to the page and `App` classes in **PersistentKeypad** to save the keypad text when the program is terminated. The `App` class in **XamlKeypad** is basically the same as the one in **PersistentKeypad**.

Tap gestures

The `Xamarin.Forms.Button` responds to finger taps, but you can actually get finger taps from any class that derives from `View`, including `Label`, `BoxView`, and `Frame`. These tap events are not built into the `View` class, but the `View` class defines a property named `GestureRecognizers`. Taps are enabled by adding an object to this `GestureRecognizers` collection. An instance of any class that derives from `GestureRecognizer` can be added to this collection, but undoubtedly the most useful is `TapGestureRecognizer`.

Here's how to add a `TapGestureRecognizer` to a `BoxView` in code:

```

BoxView boxView = new BoxView
{
    Color = Color.Blue
};
TapGestureRecognizer tapGesture = new TapGestureRecognizer();
tapGesture.Tapped += OnBoxViewTapped;
boxView.GestureRecognizers.Add(tapGesture);

```

`TapGestureRecognizer` also defines a `NumberOfTapsRequired` property with a default value of 1. Set it to 2 to implement double taps.

To generate `Tapped` events, the `View` object must have its `IsEnabled` property set to `true`, its `IsVisible` property set to `true` (or it won't be visible at all), and its `InputTransparent` property set to `false`. These are all default conditions.

The `Tapped` handler looks just like a `Clicked` handler for the `Button`:

```

void OnBoxViewTapped(object sender, EventArgs args)
{
    ...
}

```

As you know, the `sender` argument of an event handler is normally the object that fires the event,

which in this case would be the `TapGestureRecognizer` object. That would not be of much use. Instead, the `sender` argument to the `Tapped` handler is the view being tapped, in this case the `BoxView`. That's *much* more useful!

Like `Button`, `TapGestureRecognizer` also defines `Command` and `CommandParameter` properties; these are used when implementing the MVVM design pattern, and they are discussed in a later chapter.

`TapGestureRecognizer` also defines properties named `TappedCallback` and `TappedCallbackParameter` and a constructor that includes a `TappedCallback` argument. These are all deprecated and should not be used.

In XAML, you can attach a `TapGestureRecognizer` to a view by expressing the `GestureRecognizers` collection as a property element:

```
<BoxView Color="Blue">
  <BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
    <TapGestureRecognizer Tapped="OnBoxViewTapped" />
  </BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
</BoxView>
```

As usual, the XAML is a little shorter than the equivalent code.

Let's make a program that's inspired by one of the first standalone computer games.

The Xamarin.Forms version of this game is called **MonkeyTap** because it's an imitation game. It contains four `BoxView` elements, colored red, blue, yellow, and green. When the game begins, one of the `BoxView` elements flashes, and you must then tap that `BoxView`. That `BoxView` flashes again followed by another one, and now you must tap both in sequence. Then those two flashes are followed by a third and so forth. (The original had sound as well, but **MonkeyTap** does not.) It's a rather cruel game because there is no way to win. The game just keeps on getting harder and harder until you lose.

The `MonkeyTapPage.xaml` file instantiates the four `BoxView` elements and a `Button` in the center labeled "Begin".

```
<ContentPage xmlns="http://xamarin.com/schemas/2014/forms"
  xmlns:x="http://schemas.microsoft.com/winfx/2009/xaml"
  x:Class="MonkeyTap.MonkeyTapPage">

  <ContentPage.Padding>
    <OnPlatform x:TypeArguments="Thickness"
      iOS="0, 20, 0, 0" />
  </ContentPage.Padding>

  <StackLayout>
    <BoxView x:Name="boxview0"
      VerticalOptions="FillAndExpand">
      <BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
        <TapGestureRecognizer Tapped="OnBoxViewTapped" />
      </BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
```

```

</BoxView>

<BoxView x:Name="boxview1"
    VerticalOptions="FillAndExpand">
    <BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
        <TapGestureRecognizer Tapped="OnBoxViewTapped" />
    </BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
</BoxView>

<Button x:Name="startGameButton"
    Text="Begin"
    Font="Large"
    HorizontalOptions="Center"
    Clicked="OnStartGameButtonClicked" />

<BoxView x:Name="boxview2"
    VerticalOptions="FillAndExpand">
    <BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
        <TapGestureRecognizer Tapped="OnBoxViewTapped" />
    </BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
</BoxView>

<BoxView x:Name="boxview3"
    VerticalOptions="FillAndExpand">
    <BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
        <TapGestureRecognizer Tapped="OnBoxViewTapped" />
    </BoxView.GestureRecognizers>
</BoxView>
</StackLayout>
</ContentPage>

```

All four `BoxView` elements here have a `TapGestureRecognizer` attached, but they aren't yet assigned colors. That's handled in the code-behind file because the colors won't stay constant. The colors need to be changed for the flashing effect.

The code-behind file begins with some constants and variable fields. (You'll notice that one of them is flagged as protected; in the next chapter, a class will derive from this one and require access to this field. Some methods are defined as protected as well.)

```

public partial class MonkeyTapPage
{
    const int sequenceTime = 750;           // in msec
    protected const int flashDuration = 250;

    const double offLuminosity = 0.4;     // somewhat dimmer
    const double onLuminosity = 0.75;    // much brighter

    BoxView[] boxViews;
    Color[] colors = { Color.Red, Color.Blue, Color.Yellow, Color.Green };
    List<int> sequence = new List<int>();
    int sequenceIndex;
    bool awaitingTaps;
    bool gameEnded;
}

```

```

Random random = new Random();

public MonkeyTapPage()
{
    InitializeComponent();
    boxViews = new BoxView[] { boxview0, boxview1, boxview2, boxview3 };
    InitializeBoxViewColors();
}

void InitializeBoxViewColors()
{
    for (int index = 0; index < 4; index++)
        boxViews[index].Color = colors[index].WithLuminosity(offLuminosity);
}
...
}

```

The constructor puts all four `BoxView` elements in an array; this allows them to be referenced by a simple index that has values of 0, 1, 2, and 3. The `InitializeBoxViewColors` method sets all the `BoxView` elements to their slightly dimmed nonflashed state.

The program is now waiting for the user to press the **Begin** button to start the first game. The same `Button` handles replays, so it includes a redundant initialization of the `BoxView` colors. The `Button` handler also prepares for building the sequence of flashed `BoxView` elements by clearing the sequence list and calling `StartSequence`:

```

public partial class MonkeyTapPage
{
    ...
    protected void OnStartGameButtonClicked(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        gameEnded = false;
        startGameButton.IsVisible = false;
        InitializeBoxViewColors();
        sequence.Clear();
        StartSequence();
    }

    void StartSequence()
    {
        sequence.Add(random.Next(4));
        sequenceIndex = 0;
        Device.StartTimer(TimeSpan.FromMilliseconds(sequenceTime), OnTimerTick);
    }
    ...
}

```

`StartSequence` adds a new random integer to the sequence list, initializes `sequenceIndex` to 0, and starts the timer.

In the normal case, the timer tick handler is called for each index in the sequence list and causes the corresponding `BoxView` to flash with a call to `FlashBoxView`. The timer handler returns `false`

when the sequence is at an end, also indicating by setting `awaitingTaps` that it's time for the user to imitate the sequence:

```
public partial class MonkeyTapPage
{
    ...
    bool OnTimerTick()
    {
        if (gameEnded)
            return false;

        FlashBoxView(sequence[sequenceIndex]);
        sequenceIndex++;
        awaitingTaps = sequenceIndex == sequence.Count;
        sequenceIndex = awaitingTaps ? 0 : sequenceIndex;
        return !awaitingTaps;
    }

    protected virtual void FlashBoxView(int index)
    {
        boxViews[index].Color = colors[index].WithLuminosity(onLuminosity);
        Device.StartTimer(TimeSpan.FromMilliseconds(flashDuration), () =>
        {
            if (gameEnded)
                return false;

            boxViews[index].Color = colors[index].WithLuminosity(offLuminosity);
            return false;
        });
    }
    ...
}
```

The flash is just a quarter second in duration. The `FlashBoxView` method first sets the luminosity for a bright color and creates a “one-shot” timer, so called because the timer callback method (here expressed as a lambda function) returns `false` and shuts off the timer after restoring the color's luminosity.

The `Tapped` handler for the `BoxView` elements ignores the tap if the game is already over (which only happens with a mistake by the user), and ends the game if the user taps prematurely without waiting for the program to go through the sequence. Otherwise, it just compares the tapped `BoxView` with the next one in the sequence, flashes that `BoxView` if correct, or ends the game if not:

```
public partial class MonkeyTapPage
{
    ...
    protected void OnBoxViewTapped(object sender, EventArgs args)
    {
        if (gameEnded)
            return;

        if (!awaitingTaps)
```

```
    {
        EndGame();
        return;
    }

    BoxView tappedBoxView = (BoxView)sender;
    int index = Array.IndexOf(boxViews, tappedBoxView);

    if (index != sequence[sequenceIndex])
    {
        EndGame();
        return;
    }

    FlashBoxView(index);

    sequenceIndex++;
    awaitingTaps = sequenceIndex < sequence.Count;

    if (!awaitingTaps)
        StartSequence();
}

protected virtual void EndGame()
{
    gameEnded = true;

    for (int index = 0; index < 4; index++)
        boxViews[index].Color = Color.Gray;

    startGameButton.Text = "Try again?";
    startGameButton.IsVisible = true;
}
}
```

If the user manages to “ape” the sequence all the way through, another call to `StartSequence` adds a new index to the `sequence` list and starts playing that new one. Eventually, though, there will be a call to `EndGame`, which colors all the boxes gray to emphasize the end, and reenables the `Button` for a chance to try it again.

Here’s the program after the `Button` has been clicked and hidden:



I know, I know. The game is a real drag without sound.

Let's take the opportunity in the next chapter to fix that.