2 interview guides · 88 questions with short answers

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Python interview questions

44 questions about Python with short answers and code. Each answer links to a full lesson on this site. Free, with no signup and no ads.

Basics

1. What is Python?

Python is a high-level scripting language. It is interpreted and object-oriented. The code is easy to read.

Full lesson: Python3 intro (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-intro.html)

2. How do you set up Python on your computer?

Download Python from the official site and run the installer. Check the install with the version command.

```
python3 --version
```

Full lesson: Python3 install (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-install.html)

3. What is a basic rule for Python identifiers?

The first character must be a letter or an underscore. The other parts can be letters, digits, or underscores. Identifiers are case-sensitive.

```
count = 1
Count = 2
```

Full lesson: Python3 basic syntax (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-basic-syntax.html)

4. How do you write an if-else statement in Python?

Use the if keyword and a condition. Add a colon and an indented block. Use else for the other case.

```
x = 5
if x > 0:
    print("positive")
else:
    print("not positive")
```

Full lesson: Python if else (https://techschool.top/python3/python-if-else.html)

5. How do you loop over the items in a list?

Use a for loop. The loop visits each item in the list.

```
for item in [1, 2, 3]:
    print(item)
```

Full lesson: Python for loop2 (https://techschool.top/python3/python-for-loop2.html)

6. How do you define a function in Python?

Use the def keyword and a function name. Add a colon and an indented body. Use return to send a value back.

```
def add(a, b):
    return a + b

print(add(2, 3))
```

Full lesson: Python3 function (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-function.html)

7. How do you join list elements into one string?

Use the join() method. Call it on the delimiter string. Pass the list as the argument.

```
my_list = ['Hello', 'World', 'Python']
result = ' '.join(my_list)
print(result)
```

Full lesson: Python join list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-join-list.html)

8. How do you merge two lists into one?

Use the + operator. It makes a new list with the items of both lists.

```
list1 = [1, 2, 3]
list2 = [4, 5, 6]
merged_list = list1 + list2
print(merged_list)
```

Full lesson: Python merge lists (https://techschool.top/python3/python-merge-lists.html)

9. How do you find the position of a substring in a string?

Use the index() method. It returns the start position of the substring. It raises an exception if the substring is not there.

```
text = "runoob"
print(text.index("noo"))
```

Full lesson: Python3 string index (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-string-index.html)

10. How do you find the last position of a substring in a string?

Use the rindex() method. It returns the position of the last match. It raises an exception if there is no match.

```
text = "runoob"
print(text.rindex("o"))
```

Full lesson: Python3 string rindex (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-string-rindex.html)

11. How do you add the numbers in a list?

Use the sum() function. It adds all numbers in the list and returns the total.

```
numbers = [1, 2, 3, 4]
print(sum(numbers))
```

Full lesson: Python list sum (https://techschool.top/python3/python-list-sum.html)

12. How do you make a subclass with inheritance?

Put the parent class name in parentheses after the subclass name. The subclass gets the attributes and methods of the parent. The subclass can override a method.

```
class Animal:
    def speak(self):
        return "sound"

class Dog(Animal):
    def speak(self):
        return "bark"
```

Full lesson: Python subclass inheritance (https://techschool.top/python3/python-subclass-inheritance.html)

13. How do you import a module in Python?

Use the import statement. Then use the module name and a dot to call its items.

```
import math
print(math.sqrt(16))
```

Full lesson: Python3 module (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-module.html)

14. How do you find the difference between two strings?

Use the Differ class from the difflib module. Call compare() on the two split strings. The result shows the changed lines.

```
import difflib
differ = difflib.Differ()
diff = differ.compare(["a"], ["b"])
print('\n'.join(diff))
```

Full lesson: Python string difference (https://techschool.top/python3/python-string-difference.html)

Intermediate

15. Why does join() fail on a list of numbers?

The join() method needs strings. A list of numbers causes a TypeError. Convert each number to a string first.

```
nums = [1, 2, 3]
print(' '.join(str(n) for n in nums))
```

Full lesson: Python3 string join (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-string-join.html)

16. What is a list in Python?

A list is a sequence of values. You write the values between square brackets and separate them with commas.

```
colors = ["red", "green", "blue"]
```

Full lesson: Python3 list (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-list.html)

17. How do you access an item in a list by its index?

Use square brackets after the list name. The first index is 0.

```
colors = ["red", "green", "blue"]
print(colors[1])
```

Full lesson: Python3 list (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-list.html)

18. How do you read a slice from a string?

Use square brackets with a start index and an end index. The slice includes the start index and stops before the end index.

```
text = "Hello World!"
print(text[0:5])
```

Full lesson: Python3 string (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-string.html)

19. How do you copy a list in Python?

Use a slice with no indexes to make a shallow copy. The new list has the same items as the old list.

```
li1 = [4, 8, 2]
li2 = li1[:]
print(li2)
```

Full lesson: Python copy list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-copy-list.html)

20. How do you check if a list is empty?

Use the not operator on the list. An empty list is false in a condition.

```
items = []
if not items:
    print("The list is empty")
```

Full lesson: Python empty list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-empty-list.html)

21. How do you remove all items from a list?

Call the clear method on the list. The list stays but it has no items.

```
items = [1, 2, 3]
items.clear()
print(items)
```

Full lesson: Python clear list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-clear-list.html)

22. How do you sort the items of a list?

Call the sort method on the list. The method changes the list in place.

```
nums = [3, 1, 2]
nums.sort()
print(nums)
```

Full lesson: Python sort list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-sort-list.html)

23. How do you write text to a file and read it back?

Use the open function with a mode string. The with keyword closes the file for you.

```
with open("test.txt", "wt") as f:
    f.write("Hello")
with open("test.txt", "rt") as f:
    print(f.read())
```

Full lesson: Python3 file io (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-file-io.html)

24. How do you use StringIO to work with text in memory?

Import StringIO from the io module. You can read and write the buffer like a file.

```
from io import StringIO
buf = StringIO()
buf.write("Hello")
print(buf.getvalue())
```

Full lesson: Python stringio (https://techschool.top/python3/python-stringio.html)

25. How do you find the union of two lists?

Convert each list to a set. Then use the union operator on the two sets.

```
a = [1, 2, 3]
b = [3, 4, 5]
print(set(a) | set(b))
```

Full lesson: Python list union (https://techschool.top/python3/python-list-union.html)

26. What happens when you use a list index that is out of range?

Python raises an IndexError. The index must be less than the length of the list.

```
items = [1, 2]
print(items[5])  # IndexError
```

Full lesson: Python3 list (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-list.html)

27. Why does a copy made with = not create a new list?

The = operator binds a second name to the same list object. A change through one name appears through the other name.

```
a = [1, 2]
b = a
b.append(3)
print(a)  # [1, 2, 3]
```

Full lesson: Python copy list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-copy-list.html)

28. Why does a for loop over a list fail when you remove items inside the loop?

The loop uses an internal index. When you remove an item, the later items move left and the loop skips some of them.

```
items = [1, 2, 3]
for x in items:
    items.remove(x)
print(items)  # [2]
```

Full lesson: Python3 loop (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-loop.html)

29. Why does a while loop run forever when you forget to update the condition variable?

The condition stays true, so the loop never stops. You must change the variable inside the loop body.

```
x = 0
while x < 3:
    print(x)
    x += 1
```

Full lesson: Python3 loop (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-loop.html)

Common mistakes

30. Why does a module import fail when the file name is wrong?

Python looks for a file with the module name and the .py suffix. A wrong name causes a ModuleNotFoundError.

```
import mymodule  # ModuleNotFoundError if mymodule.py is missing
```

Full lesson: Python3 module (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-module.html)

31. How do you run a Python script from the command line?

Type python and the file name. The interpreter reads the file and runs the code.

```
python test.py
```

Full lesson: Python3 tutorial (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-tutorial.html)

32. How do you define a class in Python?

Use the class keyword and a class name. Put the class body under the class line.

```
class Dog:
    def bark(self):
        print("Woof")
```

Full lesson: Python3 class (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-class.html)

33. How do you create an object from a class?

Call the class name like a function. The result is a new object of that class.

```
d = Dog()
d.bark()
```

Full lesson: Python3 class (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-class.html)

34. How do you make a multiplication table with two loops?

Use one loop for the rows and one loop for the columns. Print each product on the same row.

```
for i in range(1, 10):
    for j in range(1, i + 1):
        print('{}x{}={}'.format(j, i, i * j), end=' ')
    print()
```

Full lesson: Python3 99 table (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-99-table.html)

35. How do you sort a list without changing the original list?

Call the sorted() function on the list. The function returns a new sorted list and keeps the old list as it is.

```
numbers = [3, 1, 2]
new_list = sorted(numbers)
print(numbers)
print(new_list)
```

Full lesson: Python sort list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-sort-list.html)

36. How do you install Python packages with uv?

Run the uv pip install command and give the package name. The tool adds the package to your environment.

```
uv pip install requests
```

Full lesson: Uv tutorial (https://techschool.top/python3/uv-tutorial.html)

37. How do you sort a list with the Shell sort method?

Shell sort compares items that are far apart. It then reduces the gap until the gap is zero.

```
def shellSort(arr):
    n = len(arr)
    gap = int(n / 2)
    while gap > 0:
        for i in range(gap, n):
            temp = arr[i]
        gap = int(gap / 2)
```

Full lesson: Python shellsort (https://techschool.top/python3/python-shellsort.html)

38. How do you open a file with the with keyword?

Use the with keyword and the open() function. Python closes the file for you at the end of the block.

```
with open("test.txt", "rt") as in_file:
    text = in_file.read()
print(text)
```

Full lesson: Python3 file io (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-file-io.html)

39. How do you check if a list is empty without len()?

Use the not operator on the list. An empty list gives False, so not gives True.

```
my_list = []
if not my_list:
    print("The list is empty")
```

Full lesson: Python empty list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-empty-list.html)

40. Why does a list change when you edit its copy made with =?

The = sign does not copy a list. It gives a second name to the same list object.

```
a = [1, 2]
b = a
b.append(3)
print(a)
```

Full lesson: Python copy list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-copy-list.html)

41. Why does sort() return None?

The sort() method changes the list in place. It returns None, so you must not assign its result to a variable.

```
numbers = [3, 1, 2]
numbers.sort()
print(numbers)
```

Full lesson: Python sort list (https://techschool.top/python3/python-sort-list.html)

42. Why does a function fail when you forget the self parameter?

A method needs self as its first parameter. Without self, Python cannot find the object.

```
class Dog:
    def bark(self):
        print("Woof")
```

Full lesson: Python3 class (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-class.html)

43. Why does a file read fail when you open it in write mode?

Mode "wt" removes the old file content. Use mode "rt" to read a file that already has text.

```
with open("test.txt", "rt") as in_file:
    print(in_file.read())
```

Full lesson: Python3 file io (https://techschool.top/python3/python3-file-io.html)

44. Why does a set union remove duplicate items from two lists?

A set holds each item only one time. The union of two sets drops all repeated values.

```
list1 = [1, 2, 3]
list2 = [3, 4]
print(list(set(list1).union(set(list2))))
```

Full lesson: Python list union (https://techschool.top/python3/python-list-union.html)

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Java interview questions

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Basics

1. What is an object in Java?

An object is an instance of a class. It has state and behavior. The state is stored in fields and the behavior is stored in methods.

Full lesson: Java basic syntax (https://techschool.top/java/java-basic-syntax.html)

2. What is a class in Java?

A class is a template for objects. It describes the state and behavior of its objects. Java code creates objects from the class.

Full lesson: Java basic syntax (https://techschool.top/java/java-basic-syntax.html)

3. How do you declare an ArrayList in Java?

Import the ArrayList class from java.util first. Then declare the type and the object name. The generic type must be a reference data type.

```
import java.util.ArrayList;
ArrayList<String> sites = new ArrayList<>();
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist.html)

4. Which class is the parent of all Java classes?

The Object class is the parent of all classes. Every class inherits from Object. A class without an explicit parent inherits Object automatically.

```
public class Example extends Object { }
```

Full lesson: Java object class (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-class.html)

5. What does the ArrayList add() method do?

The add() method inserts an element into the list. Without an index, it appends the element to the end. With an index, it inserts the element at that position.

```
sites.add("Google");
sites.add(1, "Wiki");
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist add (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-add.html)

6. What does the ArrayList get() method return?

The get() method returns the element at the given index. The index starts at zero. An index out of range throws an IndexOutOfBoundsException.

```
String name = sites.get(0);
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist get (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-get.html)

7. What does the ArrayList set() method return?

The set() method replaces the element at the given index. It returns the element that was at that index before. An index out of range throws an IndexOutOfBoundsException.

```
String old = sites.set(0, "Bing");
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist set (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-set.html)

8. What does the ArrayList size() method return?

The size() method returns the number of elements in the list. The count includes all current elements. The count does not include empty slots.

```
int count = sites.size();
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist size (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-size.html)

9. What does the ArrayList indexOf() method return?

The indexOf() method returns the index of the first match. It returns -1 when the element is absent. The search uses the equals() method.

```
int i = sites.indexOf("Google");
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist indexof (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-indexof.html)

10. What does the ArrayList lastIndexOf() method return?

The lastIndexOf() method returns the index of the last match. It returns -1 when the element is absent. Use it to find a repeated element from the end.

```
int i = sites.lastIndexOf("Google");
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist lastindexof (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-lastindexof.html)

11. How do you convert an ArrayList to a string?

Call the toString() method on the list. It returns the elements in square brackets. The elements are separated by a comma and a space.

```
System.out.println(sites.toString());
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist tostring (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-tostring.html)

12. How do you remove elements from an ArrayList by a condition?

Use the removeIf() method with a predicate. The method removes every element that matches the predicate. It returns true when it removes at least one element.

```
sites.removeIf(s -> s.startsWith("G"));
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist removeif (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-removeif.html)

13. How do you merge two arrays into one list?

Create a list from the first array with Arrays.asList(). Then call addAll() with the second array. Convert the list back to an array with toArray().

```
List list = new ArrayList(Arrays.asList(a));
list.addAll(Arrays.asList(b));
Object[] c = list.toArray();
```

Full lesson: Arrays merge (https://techschool.top/java/arrays_merge.html)

14. How do you list the file names in a directory?

Call the list() method on a File object for the directory. It returns a String array of names. It returns null when the path is not a directory.

```
File dir = new File("C:/temp");
String[] names = dir.list();
```

Full lesson: Java file list (https://techschool.top/java/java-file-list.html)

Intermediate

15. Why does list.add(5, "X") throw an exception on a list of size 3?

The add() method needs a valid index. A list of size 3 accepts index 0 to 3 only. Index 5 is out of range and throws IndexOutOfBoundsException.

```
ArrayList<String> list = new ArrayList<>();
list.add("A");
list.add(5, "X"); // IndexOutOfBoundsException
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist add (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-add.html)

16. What is the basic syntax of a Java class?

A class starts with the class keyword and a name. The class body goes between two braces.

```
public class Car {
  // fields and methods
}
```

Full lesson: Java basic syntax (https://techschool.top/java/java-basic-syntax.html)

17. How do you declare a variable in Java?

You write the type first, then the name. You can add an equal sign and a value to initialize it.

```
int count = 10;
String name = "Java";
```

Full lesson: Java variable types (https://techschool.top/java/java-variable-types.html)

18. What are the eight basic data types in Java?

The eight types are byte, short, int, long, float, double, char, and boolean. Each type has a fixed size and range.

Full lesson: Java basic datatypes (https://techschool.top/java/java-basic-datatypes.html)

19. What is the difference between a public class and a private method?

A public class is visible to all other classes. A private method is visible only inside its own class.

```
public class Demo {
  private void helper() { }
}
```

Full lesson: Java modifier types (https://techschool.top/java/java-modifier-types.html)

20. How do you create an object from a class?

You use the new keyword with the class name. This calls the class constructor.

```
Car myCar = new Car();
```

Full lesson: Java object classes (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-classes.html)

21. What does the ArrayList clear() method do?

The clear() method removes all elements from the list. The list becomes empty but still exists.

```
list.clear();
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist clear (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-clear.html)

22. What does the ArrayList addAll() method do?

The addAll() method adds all elements from another collection to the list. It returns true if the list changes.

```
list.addAll(otherList);
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist addall (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-addall.html)

23. What does the ArrayList remove() method do?

The remove() method deletes one element at a given index. It returns the removed element.

```
String removed = list.remove(2);
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist remove (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-remove.html)

24. How do you sort an ArrayList in natural order?

You call the sort() method with a comparator. Use Comparator.naturalOrder() for ascending order.

```
list.sort(Comparator.naturalOrder());
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist sort (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-sort.html)

25. What does the File toString() method return?

The toString() method returns the path string used to create the File object. It does not check if the file exists.

```
File f = new File("C:/test.txt");
System.out.println(f.toString());
```

Full lesson: Java file tostring (https://techschool.top/java/java-file-tostring.html)

26. How do you get all files and subdirectories in a directory?

You call the listFiles() method on a File object that points to a directory. It returns an array of File objects.

```
File dir = new File("C:/temp");
File[] files = dir.listFiles();
```

Full lesson: Java file listfiles (https://techschool.top/java/java-file-listfiles.html)

27. What does the Object notify() method do?

The notify() method wakes up one thread that waits on the object monitor. The choice of thread is arbitrary.

```
synchronized (lock) {
  lock.notify();
}
```

Full lesson: Java object notify (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-notify.html)

28. What does the Object notifyAll() method do?

The notifyAll() method wakes up all threads that wait on the object monitor. They then compete for the lock.

```
synchronized (lock) {
  lock.notifyAll();
}
```

Full lesson: Java object notifyall (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-notifyall.html)

29. What happens if you call get() with an index equal to the list size?

The get() method throws an IndexOutOfBoundsException. Valid indices start at 0 and end at size minus 1.

```
list.get(list.size()); // throws exception
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist get (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-get.html)

Common mistakes

30. What is a common mistake when you use clone() on an ArrayList?

The clone() method makes a shallow copy. Changes to mutable elements in the copy also affect the original list.

```
ArrayList<String> copy = (ArrayList<String>) list.clone();
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist clone (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-clone.html)

31. What does the String indexOf() method return?

The method returns the index of the first occurrence of a character or substring. It returns -1 if the character or substring is not found.

```
String s = "hello";
int i = s.indexOf('l');
System.out.println(i);
```

Full lesson: Java string indexof (https://techschool.top/java/java-string-indexof.html)

32. How do you declare a local variable in a method?

You declare a local variable inside a method with a type and a name. You can also assign a value when you declare it.

```
public void exampleMethod() {
    int localVar = 10;
    System.out.println(localVar);
}
```

Full lesson: Java variable types (https://techschool.top/java/java-variable-types.html)

33. What is the default return value of the Object toString() method?

The default toString() method returns the class name, then an @ sign, then the hexadecimal hash code. This format is not easy to read.

```
Object obj = new Object();
System.out.println(obj.toString());
```

Full lesson: Java object tostring (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-tostring.html)

34. How do you get the runtime class of an object?

You call the getClass() method on the object. The method returns a Class object that represents the runtime class.

```
String s = "hello";
System.out.println(s.getClass());
```

Full lesson: Java object getclass (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-getclass.html)

35. What does the ArrayList clone() method do?

The clone() method copies an ArrayList. It makes a shallow copy, so the new list shares element references with the old list.

```
ArrayList<String> a = new ArrayList<>();
a.add("A");
ArrayList<String> b = (ArrayList<String>) a.clone();
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist clone (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-clone.html)

36. What does the Hashtable class store?

The Hashtable class stores key/value pairs in a hash table. It supports synchronization, unlike HashMap.

```
Hashtable<String, Integer> h = new Hashtable<>();
h.put("one", 1);
System.out.println(h.get("one"));
```

Full lesson: Java hashtable class (https://techschool.top/java/java-hashtable-class.html)

37. What does the Dictionary class do?

The Dictionary class stores key/value pairs, similar to a Map. It is an abstract class, so you cannot create a Dictionary object directly.

```
// Dictionary is abstract, so use a subclass like Hashtable
Dictionary<String, String> d = new Hashtable<>();
d.put("key", "value");
```

Full lesson: Java dictionary class (https://techschool.top/java/java-dictionary-class.html)

38. What happens if you call addAll() with a null collection?

The addAll() method throws a NullPointerException if the given collection is null. You must pass a non-null collection.

```
ArrayList<String> list = new ArrayList<>();
list.addAll(null); // throws NullPointerException
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist addall (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-addall.html)

39. What happens if you call remove() with an index that is out of range?

The remove() method throws an IndexOutOfBoundsException if the index is out of range. Check the list size before you call remove().

```
ArrayList<String> list = new ArrayList<>();
list.add("A");
list.remove(5); // throws IndexOutOfBoundsException
```

Full lesson: Java arraylist remove (https://techschool.top/java/java-arraylist-remove.html)

40. What is a common mistake when you use indexOf() on a String?

A common mistake is to forget that indexOf() returns -1 when the character is not found. Always check for -1 before you use the result as an index.

```
String s = "hello";
int i = s.indexOf('z');
if (i != -1) {
    System.out.println(s.charAt(i));
}
```

Full lesson: Java string indexof (https://techschool.top/java/java-string-indexof.html)

41. What is a common mistake when you declare a local variable?

A common mistake is to use a local variable before you assign a value to it. The compiler reports an error for an uninitialized local variable.

```
public void test() {
    int x;
    System.out.println(x); // compile error
}
```

Full lesson: Java variable types (https://techschool.top/java/java-variable-types.html)

42. What is a common mistake when you call toString() on an object?

A common mistake is to expect a useful string from the default toString() method. The default returns class name and hash code, so override toString() for readable output.

```
class Point {
    int x = 1, y = 2;
    public String toString() { return "(" + x + "," + y + ")"; }
}
```

Full lesson: Java object tostring (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-tostring.html)

43. What is a common mistake when you use getClass()?

A common mistake is to call getClass() on a null reference. This throws a NullPointerException because there is no object.

```
Object obj = null;
System.out.println(obj.getClass()); // throws NullPointerException
```

Full lesson: Java object getclass (https://techschool.top/java/java-object-getclass.html)

44. What is a common mistake when you use Hashtable?

A common mistake is to store null keys or null values. Hashtable does not permit null keys or null values and throws a NullPointerException.

```
Hashtable<String, String> h = new Hashtable<>();
h.put(null, "value"); // throws NullPointerException
```

Full lesson: Java hashtable class (https://techschool.top/java/java-hashtable-class.html)

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