University of Berne Institute of Computer Science http://www.iam.unibe.ch/~ducasse/

SUnit Explained

Stéphane Ducasse (revised by Rick Zaccone)

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1. Introduction

SUnit is a minimal yet powerful framework that supports the creation of tests. SUnit is the mother of unit test frameworks. SUnit was developed originally by Kent Beck and extended by Joseph Pelrine and others over several iterations to take into account the notion of resources that we will illustrate later. The interest in SUnit is not limited to Smalltalk or Squeak. Indeed, legions of developers understood the power of unit testing and now versions of SUnit exist in nearly any language including Java, Python, Perl, Oracle and many others [4]. The current version of SUnit is 3.1. The official web site of SUnit is <http://sunit.sourceforge.net/>.

Testing and building test suites is not new and everybody knows that tests are a good way to catch errors. eXtreme Programming, by putting testing in the core of its methodology, is shedding a new light on testing, an often disliked discipline. The Smalltalk community has a long tradition of testing due to the incremental development supported by its programming environment. However, once you write tests in a workspace or as example methods there is no easy way to keep track of them and to automatically run them and tests that you cannot automatically run are of little interests. Moreover, having examples often does not inform the reader of expected results, since much of the logic is left unspecified. SUnit is interesting because it allows you to structure tests, describe the context of tests and to run them automatically. In less than two minutes you can write tests using SUnit instead of writing small code snippets and get all the advantage of stored and automatically executable tests.

In this article we start by discussing why we test, then we present an example with SUnit and we go deep into the SUnit implementation.

2. Testing and Tests

Most developers believe that tests are a waste of time. Who has not heard: "I would write tests if I would have more time."? If you write code that never changes, you should not write tests, but this also means that your application is not really used or useful. In fact tests are an investment for the future. In particular, having a suite of tests is extremely useful and it saves a lot of time when your application changes.

Tests play several roles: first they are an active and always synchronized documentation of the functionality they cover. Second they represent the confidence that developers can have in a piece of functionality. They help you to quickly find the parts that break due to introduced changes. Finally, writing tests at the same time or even before writing code forces you to think about the functionality you want to design. By writing tests first you have to clearly state the context in which your functionality will run, the way it will interact and more important the expected results. Moreover, when you are writing tests you are your first client and your code will naturally improves.

The culture of tests has always been present in the Smalltalk community because after writing a method, we would write a small expression to test it. This practice supports the extremely tight incremental development cycle promoted by Smalltalk. However, doing so does not bring the maximum benefit from testing because the tests are not saved and run automatically. Moreover it often happens that the context of the tests is left unspecified so the reader has to interpret the results and assess if they are right or wrong.

It is clear that we cannot test all the aspects of an application. Covering a complete application is simply impossible and should not be goal of testing. It may also happen that even with a good test suite some bugs can creep into the application and they can be left hidden waiting for an opportunity to damage your system. This is not a problem if you write a test that covers the bug as soon as you uncover it.

Writing good tests is a technique that can be easily learned by practicing. Let us look at the properties that tests should have to get a maximum benefit.

- Tests should be repeatable. You should be able to repeat a test as often as you want.
- Tests should run without human intervention. You should even be able to run them during the night.
- Tests should tell a story. A test should cover one aspect of a piece of code. A test should act as a scenario that you would like to read to understand a functionality.
- Tests should have a change frequency lower than the one of the covered functionality. Indeed you do not want to change all your tests every time you modify your application. One way to achieve this property is to write tests based on the interfaces of the tested functionality.

The number of tests should be somewhat proportional to the number of tested functionalities. For example, changing one aspect of the system should not break all the tests you wrote but only a limited number. This is important because having 100 tests broken should be a much more important message for you than having 10 tests failing.

eXtreme Programming proposes writing tests before writing code. This may seem against our deep developer habits. Here are the observations we made while practicing up front tests writing. Up front testing helps you to know what you want to code, it helps you know when you are done, and it helps to conceptualize the functionality of a class and to design the interface. Now it is time to write a first test and to convince you that you should be using SUnit.

3. SUnit by Example

Before going into the details of SUnit, we will show a step by step example. We use an example that tests the class Set. Try entering the code as we go along.

3.1. Step 1

First you should create a TestCase subclass called ExampleSetTest. Right click on TestCase and select "Create Subclass...". Add two instance variable so your new class looks as follows.

```
XProgramming.SUnit defineClass: #ExampleSetTest
superclass: #{XProgramming.SUnit.TestCase}
indexedType: #none
private: false
instanceVariableNames: 'full empty'
classInstanceVariableNames: ''
imports: ''
category: 'SUnit'
```

The class ExampleSetTest groups all tests related to testing the class Set. It defines the context in which all the tests that we specify will operate. Here the context is described by specifying two instance variables full and empty that represent a full and empty set.

3.2. Step 2

The method setUp acts as a context definer method or initialize method. It is invoked before the execution of each test method defined in this class. Here we initialize the empty variable to refer to an empty set and the full variable to refer to a set containing two elements. We define the method setUp as follows.

```
ExampleSetTest>>setUp
  empty := Set new.
  full := Set with: 5 with: #abc
```

This method defines the context for each of the tests defined in our subclass of TestCase (ExampleSetTest in this example). In testing jargon it is called the *fixture* of the test.

3.3. Step 3

Lets create some tests by defining some methods in the class ExampleSetTest. Basically one method represents one test. If your test methods start with the string 'test' the framework will collect them automatically for you into test suites ready to be executed.

The first test named testIncludes, tests the includes: method of Set. We say that sending the message includes: 5 to a set containing 5 should return true. Here we see clearly that the test relies on the fact that the setUp method has been run before.

```
ExampleSetTest>>testIncludes
```

```
self assert: (full includes: 5).
self assert: (full includes: #abc)
```

The second test named testOccurrences verifies that the number of occurrences of 5 in the full set is equal to one even if we add another element 5 to the set.

```
ExampleSetTest>>testOccurrences
```

```
self assert: (empty occurrencesOf: 0) = 0.
self assert: (full occurrencesOf: 5) = 1.
full add: 5.
self assert: (full occurrencesOf: 5) = 1
```

Finally we test that if we remove the element 5 from a set the set no longer contains it.

ExampleSetTest>>testRemove

```
full remove: 5.
self assert: (full includes: #abc).
self deny: (full includes: 5)
```

3.4. Step 4

Now we can execute the tests. This is possible using the user interface of SUnit. This interface depends on the dialect you use. In Squeak and VisualWorks, you should execute TestRunner open. After clicking on the **Run** button, you see a window similar to Figure 1. You can also run you tests by executing the following code: (ExampleSetTest selector: #testRemove) run. This expression is equivalent to the shorter one ExampleSetTest run: #testRemove. We usually include an expression in the comment of our tests that allows us to run them while browsing them as shown below.

😑 😑 SUnit Camp Smalltalk 3.0 TestRunner		
Refresh	ExampleSetTest	Run RunAll
	Pass	
	3 run	
		Debug

Figure 1: The user interface of SUnit in VisualWorks

```
ExampleSetTest>>testRemove
    "self run: #testRemove"
    full remove: 5.
    self assert: (full includes: #abc).
    self deny: (full includes: 5)
```

To debug a test you may use the following expressions:

(ExampleSetTest selector: #testRemove) debug

or

ExampleSetTest debug: #testRemove

3.5. Explanation

The method assert: which is defined in the class TestCase requires a boolean argument. This boolean represents the value of a tested expression. When the argument is true, the expression is considered to be correct. We say that the test is valid. When the argument is false, then the test failed. In fact, SUnit has two kinds of errors. A *failure* means that a test has failed. An *error* is something that has not been tested such as an out of bounds error. The method deny: is the negation of assert:. Hence aTest deny: anExpression is equal to aTest assert: anExpression not.

SUnit offers two methods should:raise: and shouldnt:raise: for testing exception handling. For example, you would use (aTest should: aBlock Section 4: Basic How To

raise: anException) to test that exceptions have been raised during the execution of an expression. The following test illustrates the use of this method. Enter and run this test.

```
ExampleSetTest>>testIllegal
    self should: [empty at: 5] raise: Error.
    self should: [empty at: 5 put: #abc] raise: Error
```

SUnit is capable of running on all Smalltalk dialects. To accomplish this, the SUnit developers have factored out the dialect dependent aspects. The class method TestResult>>error provides the name of the error handler in a dialect independent fashion. Take a look at the code to see how this is done. If you had wanted to write tests that would work in several dialects, you could have written testIllegal as follows.

```
ExampleSetTest>>testIllegal
   self should: [empty at: 5] raise: TestResult error.
   self should: [empty at: 5 put: #abc]
      raise: TestResult error
```

Give it a try.

4. Basic How To

This section will give you more details on how to use SUnit. If you are familiar with another testing framework such as Java's JUnit, much of this will be familiar since it has its roots in SUnit. Normally you will use SUnit's GUI to run tests, but there are situations where you may not want to use it.

4.1. Normal Operation

Normally, you will run your tests by using the test runner.

TestRunner open

4.2. How to Run a Single Test

Suppose you want to run a single test. You can run it as follows.

ExampleSetTest run: #testRemove 1 run, 1 passed, 0 failed, 0 errors



Figure 2: The four classes representing the core of SUnit

4.3. How to Run All Tests in a TestCase Subclass

Just ask the class itself to build the test suite for you. Only the tests starting with the string 'test' will be added to the suite. Here is how you turn all the test* methods into a TestSuite.

```
ExampleSetTest suite run
5 run, 5 passed, 0 failed, 0 errors
```

4.4. Must I Subclass TestCase?

In JUnit we can build a TestSuite from an arbitrary class containing test* methods. In Smalltalk you can do the same but you will have then to create a suite by hand and your class will have to implement all the essential TestCase methods so we suggest you not do it. The framework is there, so use it.

5. The SUnit Framework

SUnit 3.1 introduces the notion of resources that are necessary when building tests that require long set up phases. A test resource specifies a set up that is only executed once for a set of tests contrary to the TestCase method which is executed before every test execution.

SUnit consists of four main classes. They are TestCase, TestSuite, TestResult, and TestResource as shown in Figure 2.

5.1. TestCase

The class TestCase represents a test or more generally a family of tests that share a common context. The context is specified by the declaration of instance variables on a subclass of TestCase and by the specialization of the method setUp which initializes the context in which the will be executed. The class TestCase also defines the method tearDown that is responsible for releasing any objects allocated during the execution of the method setUp. The method tearDown is invoked after the execution of each test.

5.2. TestSuite

The class TestSuite contains a collection of test cases. An instance of TestSuite is composed of instances of TestCase subclasses (a instance of TestCase is characterized by the selector that should run) and TestSuite. The classes TestSuite and TestCase form a composite pattern in which TestSuite is the composite and TestCase the leaves.

5.3. TestResult

The class TestResult represents the results of a TestSuite execution. It contains the number of test passed, the number of tests failed, and the number of errors.

5.4. TestResource

The class TestResource represents a resource that is used by a test or a set of tests. The point is that a resource is associated with subclass of TestCase and it is run automatically once before all the tests are executed contrary to the TestCase methods setUp and tearDown that are executed before and after each test.

A resource is run before a test suite is run. A resource is defined by overriding the class method resources as shown by the following example. By default, an instance of TestSuite assumes that its resources are the list of resources constructed from the TestCases that it contains.

We define a subclass of TestResource called MyTestResource and we associate it with MyTestCase by specializing the class method resources to return an array of the test classes to which it is associated.

```
TestResource subclass: #MyTestResource
    instanceVariableNames: ''
```

MyTestResource>>setUp "Set up resources here."

```
Section 6: Features of SUnit 3.1
MyTestResource>>tearDown
    "Tear down resources here."
MyTestCase class>>resources
    "associate a resource with a testcase"
    ^Array with: MyTestResource
```

As with a TestCase, we use the method setUp to define the actions that will be run during the set up of the resource.

6. Features of SUnit 3.1

In addition to TestResource, SUnit 3.1 adds assertion description strings, logging support, and resumable test failures.

6.1. Assertion Description Strings

The TestCase assertion protocol has been extended with a number of methods allowing the assertion to have a description. These methods take a String as second argument. If the test case fails, this string will be passed along to the exception handler, allowing more variety in messages than "Assertion failed". Of course, this string can be constructed dynamically.

The added methods in TestCase are:

#assert:description:
#deny:description:
#should:description:
#shouldnt:description:

6.2. Logging Support

The description strings described above may also be logged to a Stream such as the Transcript, a file, stdout etc. You can choose whether to log by overriding TestCase>>#isLogging in your test case class, and choose where to log to by overriding TestCase>>#failureLog. Note that these logging facilities will be available in release 3.2 of SUnit.

Section 7: Key Implementation Aspects

6.3. Resumable Test Failure

A resumable TestFailure has been added. This is a really powerful feature that uses the powerful exception mechanisms offered by Smalltalk. What can this be used for? Take a look at this example:

aCollection do: [:each | self assert: each isFoo]

In this case, as soon as the first element of the collection isn't Foo, the test stops. In most cases, however, we would like to continue, and see both how many elements and which elements aren't Foo. It would also be nice to log this information. You can do this in this way:

```
aCollection do:
   [:each |
    self
      assert: each isFoo
      description: each printString , ' is not Foo'
      resumable: true]
```

This will print out a message to your logging device for each element that fails. It doesn't accumulate failures, i.e., if the assertion fails 10 times in your test method, you'll still only see one failure.

7. Key Implementation Aspects

We show now some key aspects of the implementation by following the execution of a test. This is not necessary to use SUnit but can help you to customize it.

7.1. Running One Test

To execute one test, we evaluate the expression

```
(TestCase selector: aSymbol) run.
```

The method TestCase>>run creates an instance of TestResult that will contain the results of the executed tests, then it invokes the method TestCase>>run:.

TestCase>>run

```
| result |
result := TestResult new.
self run: result.
^result
```

Section 7: Key Implementation Aspects

Note that in a future release, the class of the TestResult to be created will be returned by a method so that new TestResult can be introduced. The method TestCase>>run: invokes the method TestResult>>runCase:.

```
TestCase>>run: aResult
aResult runCase: self
```

The method TestResult>>runCase: is the method that will invoke the method TestCase>>runCase that executes a test.

Without going into the details, TestCase>>runCase pays attention to any exception that may be raised during the execution of a test, invokes the execution of a TestCase by calling the method runCase and counts the errors, failures and passed tests.

```
TestResult>>runCase: aTestCase
    | testCasePassed |
    testCasePassed :=
            Г
            [aTestCase runCase.
            true] sunitOn: self class failure
                    do:
                         [:signal |
                         self failures add: aTestCase.
                         signal sunitExitWith: false]]
                    sunitOn: self class error
                    do:
                         [:signal |
                        self errors add: aTestCase.
                         signal sunitExitWith: false].
    testCasePassed ifTrue: [self passed add: aTestCase]
```

The method TestCase>>runCase uses the calls to the methods setUp and tearDown as shown below.

```
TestCase>>runCase
    self setUp.
    [self performTest] sunitEnsure: [self tearDown]
```

7.2. Running a TestSuite

To execute more than one test, we invoke the method TestSuite>>run on a TestSuite. The class TestCase provides some functionality to get a test suite from its methods. The expression

MyTestCase buildSuiteFromSelectors

returns a suite containing all the tests defined in the class MyTestCase.

The method TestSuite>>run creates an instance of TestResult, verifies that all the resource are available, then the method TestSuite>>run: is invoked which runs all the tests that compose the test suite. All the resources are then released.

```
TestSuite>>run
```

The class TestResource and its subclasses keep track of the their currently created instances (one per class) that can be accessed and created using the class method current. This instance is cleared when the tests have finished running and the resources are reset.

It is during the resource availability check that the resource is created if needed as shown in the class method TestResource class>>isAvailable. During the TestResource instance creation, it is initialized and the method setUp is invoked. (Note it may happen that your version of SUnit 3.0 does not correctly initialize the resource. A version with this bug circulated a lot. Verify that TestResource class>>new calls the method initialize).

8. Bits of Wisdom

Testing is difficult. Here is some advice on building tests.

- **Self-contained tests** Each time you change your code you do not want to change your tests, therefore try to write them in such a way that they are self-contained. This is difficult but pays in the long term. Writing tests in terms of stable interfaces supports self-contained tests.
- **Do not over test** Try to build your tests so that they do not overlap. It is annoying to have many tests covering all the same aspects and breaking all at the same time.
- **Unit vs. Acceptance Tests** Unit tests describe one functionality and as such make it easier to identify bugs. However, for certain deeply recursive or complex setup situations, it is easier to write tests that represent a scenario. So try as much as possible to have unit tests and group them per class. For acceptance tests group then in terms of the functionality tested.

9. Extending SUnit

In this section we will explain how to extend SUnit so that it uses a setUp and tearDown that are shared by all of the tests in a TestCase subclass. We will define a new sublass of TestCase called SharingSetUpTestCase, and a subclass of SharingSetUpTestCase called SharedOne. We will also need to define a new subclass of TestSuite called SharedSetUpTestSuite, and we will make some minor adjustments to TestCase.

Our tests will be in SharedOne. When we execute

```
Transcript clear.
SharedOne suite run
we will obtain the following trace.
SharedOne>>setUp
SharedOne class>>sharedSetUp
SharedOne>>testOne
SharedOne>>tearDown
SharedOne>>tearDown
SharedOne>>testTwo
SharedOne>>tearDown
SharedOne>>tearDown
SharedOne class>>sharedTearDown
2 run, 2 passed, 0 failed, 0 errors
```

You can see that the shared code is executed just once for both tests.

9.1. SharedSetUpTestCase

The extension of the SUnit framework is based on the introduction of two classes: SharedSetUpTestCase and SharedSetUpTestSuite. The basic idea is to use a flag that is flushed (cleared) after a certain number of tests have been run. The class SharedSetUpTestCase defines one instance variable that indicates whether each test is run individually or in the context of a shared setUp and tearDown. There are also two class instance variables. One indicates the number of tests for which the shared setUp should be in effect, and the other indicates whether the shared setUp is in effect.

```
SharedSetUpTestCase
```

suiteClass is used by TestCase to determine the suite that is running.

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>sharedSetUp
    "A subclass should only override this hook to define
    a sharedSetUp"
```

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>sharedTearDown
    "Here we specify the teardown of the shared setup"
```

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>flushSharedSetUp
    sharedSetUp := nil
```

The SharedSetUpTestCase class is initialized with the number of tests for which the shared setUp should be in effect.

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>armTestsToTearDown: aNumber
    self flushSharedSetUp.
    numberOfTestsToTearDown := aNumber.
```

Every time a test is run, the method anothertestHasBeenRun is invoked. Once the specified number of tests is reached the sharedSetUp is flushed and the sharedTearDown is executed. Section 9: Extending SUnit

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>anotherTestHasBeenRun
    "Everytimes a test is run this method is called,
    once all the tests of the suite
    are run the shared setup is reset"
    numberOfTestsToTearDown := numberOfTestsToTearDown - 1.
    numberOfTestsToTearDown isZero
    ifTrue:
        [self flushSharedSetUp.
        self sharedTearDown]
```

When a test is run its setUp is executed and it then it calls the class method privateSharedSetUp. This method will only invoke the sharedSetUp if the sharedSetUp test indicates that it hasn't been done yet.

```
SharedSetUpTestCase class>>privateSharedSetUp
   sharedSetUp isNil
        ifTrue:
        [sharedSetUp := 1.
            self sharedSetUp]
```

```
SharedSetUpTestCase>>setUp
    self class privateSharedSetUp
```

```
SharedSetUpTestCase>>tearDown
    self class anotherTestHasBeenRun
```

When a test case is created we assume that it will be run once. We can change this later by invoking the method executedFromASuite.

```
SharedSetUpTestCase>>setTestSelector: aSymbol
    "Must do it this way because there is no initialize"
    runIndividually := true.
    super setTestSelector: aSymbol
SharedSetUpTestCase>>executedFromASuite
    runIndividually := false
The methods responsible for test execution are then specialized as follows.
```

```
SharedSetUpTestCase>>armTearDownCounter
    self runIndividually
        ifTrue: [self class armTestsToTearDown: 1]
SharedSetUpTestCase>>runCaseAsFailure
    self armTearDownCounter.
    super runCaseAsFailure
SharedSetUpTestCase>>runCase
    self armTearDownCounter.
    super runCase
```

9.2. SharedOne

SharedOne is a new class which inherits from SharingSetUpTestCase as follows. We define two simple tests testOne and testTwo.

```
SharedOne
    superclass: SharingSetUpTestCase
SharedOne>>testOne
    Transcript
        show: 'SharedOne>>testOne';
        cr
SharedOne>>testTwo
    Transcript
        show: 'SharedOne>>testTwo';
        cr
```

Then we define the methods setUp and tearDown that will be executed before and after the execution of the tests exactly in the same way as with non sharing tests. Note however, the fact that with the solution we will present we have to explicitly invoke the setUp method and tearDown of the superclass.

```
SharedOne>>setUp
   Transcript
      show: 'SharedOne>>setUp';
      cr.
      super setUp
```

```
Section 9: Extending SUnit
SharedOne>>tearDown
Transcript
show: 'SharedOne>>tearDown';
cr.
super tearDown
```

Finally, we define the methods sharedSetUp and sharedTearDown that will be only executed once for the two tests. Note that this solution assumes that the tests are not destructive to the shared fixture, but just query it.

```
SharedOne class>>sharedSetUp
   Transcript
      show: 'SharedOne class>>sharedSetUp';
      cr
   "My set up here."
SharedOne class>>sharedTearDown
   Transcript
      show: 'SharedOne class>>sharedTearDown';
      cr
   "My tear down here."
```

9.3. SharedSetUpTestSuite

The SharedSetUpTestSuite defines just one instance variable testCaseClass and redefines the two methods necessary to run the test suite run: and run. checkAndArmSharedSetUp initializes the number of tests to run before the shared tearDown is executed.

```
SharedSetUpTestSuite>>run
    self checkAndArmSharedSetUp.
    ^super run
```

Finally the method addTest: is specialized so that it marks all its tests with the fact that they are executed in a TestSuite and checks whether all its tests are from the same class to avoid inconsistency.

9.4. Changes to TestCase

In order for the above changes to work, you must make TestCase aware of your new test suite.

```
TestCase class>>buildSuite
    | suite |
    ^self isAbstract
    ifTrue:
        [suite := self suiteClass new.
        suite name: self name asString.
        self allSubclasses
        do: [:each |
            each isAbstract
               ifFalse: [suite addTest:
                    each buildSuiteFromSelectors]].
        suite]
        ifFalse: [self buildSuiteFromSelectors]
```

If you have made all the changes correctly, you should be able to run your tests and see the results shown in section 9.

10. Exercise

The previous section was designed to give you some insight into the workings of SUnit. You can obtain the same effect by using SUnit's resources.

Create new classes MyTestResource and MyTestCase which are subclasses of TestResource and TestCase respectively. Add the appropriate methods so that the following messages are written to the Transcript when you run your tests.

```
MyTestResource>>setUp has run.
MyTestCase>>setUp has run.
MyTestCase>>testOne has run.
MyTestCase>>tearDown has run.
MyTestCase>>setUp has run.
MyTestCase>>testTwo has run.
MyTestCase>>tearDown has run.
MyTestResource>>tearDown has run.
```

11. Conclusion

We presented why writing tests are an important way of investing on the future. We recalled that tests should be repeatable, independent of any direct human interaction and cover a precise functionality to maximize their potential. We presented in a step by step fashion how to define a couple of tests for the class Set using SUnit. Then we gave an overview of the core of the framework by presenting the classes TestCase, TestResult, TestSuite and TestResources. Finally we dived into SUnit by following the execution of a tests and test suite. We hope that we convince you about the importance of repeatable unit tests and about the ease of writing them using SUnit.

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