

Basic API

This guide explains in-depth the different features for navigating through AST in different ways.

For XPath API, read more here: [XPath API](#)

Contents:

- [Basic navigation: *BaseNode* and *TreeNode*](#)
- [Checking conditions in the nodes: *TreeNode* and *NodePredicate*](#)
- [Navigation within the navigation: *TreeNode* and *NodeVisitor*](#)
- [High-Level AST and Low-Level AST](#)

Basic navigation: *BaseNode* and *TreeNode*

In our rule's *visit* method, we have access to a *BaseNode* type object (*com.als.core.ast.BaseNode* interface). This object represents the AST root node in which the source code we are analyzing has become, and it is the starting point from which to seek the information needed to determine whether if the code shows a violation of the standard to be certified.

To browse through the nodes, we have the *TreeNode* class (*com.als.core.ast.TreeNode*), which is an implementation of *BaseNode*. Therefore, we can turn our *BaseNode* nodes into *TreeNode* and vice versa at any time.

BaseNode <-> *TreeNode* conversion

```
import com.als.core.AbstractRule;
import com.als.core.RuleContext;
import com.als.core.ast.BaseNode;

public class MyDummyRule extends AbstractRule {
    @Override
    protected void visit (BaseNode root, final RuleContext ctx) {
        // rule body...
    }
}
```

TreeNode type objects provide us almost unlimited ways to move all along the AST, looking for sibling, descendant or ancestor of any level nodes and meeting the specific characteristics we want. Among the most useful methods, we have:

- *child*: it searches between "child" nodes (level 1 descendants of a node).
- *find*: it searches inside the subtree in the current node (level 'n' descendants of a node).
- *parent*: it returns the current node's parent.
- *ancestor*: it searches among all the ancestors of the current node.
- *rightSibling* / *leftSibling*: it returns the node immediately to the right/left of the current node.

Checking conditions in the nodes: *TreeNode* and *NodePredicate*

Other *TreeNode* objects functionalities, not directly related to navigation, but very useful, are:

- *count*: it counts the number of nodes of a certain type in the subtree in the current node.
- *countAncestors*: it counts the number of nodes of certain type among the ancestors of the current one.
- *findImage*: it returns the node image (usually, the concrete item of the source code under analysis, which is represented by the current node).
- *findLine*: it returns the number of lines of the node (corresponding to the line number within the file of the source code under analysis in which the concrete item is, which is represented by the current node).
- *has*: it checks if there is a node in the subtree within the current node.
- *hasAncestor*: it checks if there is a node among the ascendants of the current node.
- *hasChildren*: it checks if there is a node among the children (level 1 descendants) of the current node.
- *isLeaf* / *isRoot*: it checks if the current node is a leaf or the root node.
- *isNull* / *isNotNull*: it checks if the current object is a null node (very useful for testing after search operations, since those can return *TreeNode.NULLTREE*, *NullNode.NULL* or *null* objects when they do not find a node that meets the specified conditions).
- *isTypeName*: it checks the current node's type.

Most search methods allow arguments to establish specific conditions that the nodes to search should meet. These conditions may be as simple as “the node must be of a certain type” or something like “the node must be of a certain type, and have a certain image, and be descendant/ancestor of...”.

For these cases, we can define a *NodePredicate* (*com.als.core.ast.NodePredicate*) object:

NodePredicate sample:

```
NodePredicate nodeToFind = new NodePredicate {
    public boolean is(BaseNode node) {
        TreeNode tNode = TreeNode.on(node);
        return tNode.isTypeName("MethodDeclaration") &&&
            tNode.findImage().equals("methodName") &&&
            tNode.hasAncestor("InterfaceDeclaration");
    }
};

@Override
protected void visit (BaseNode root, final RuleContext ctx) {
    TreeNode methodDeclar = TreeNode.on(root).find(nodeToFind);
}
```

Navigation within the navigation: *TreeNode* and *NodeVisitor*

We have already mentioned in [Getting Started with Rule Development](#) the *visitor* strategy, with which we could go all along an AST nodes from a given one, using the **accept** methods provided by *TreeNode*.

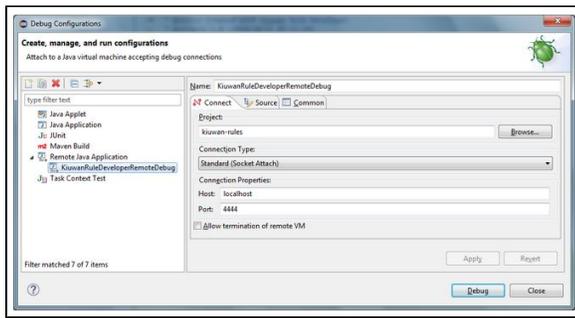
Visitor strategy:

```
import com.als.core.ast.TreeNode;
import com.als.core.ast.NodeVisitor;

public class MyDummyRule extends AbstractRule {
    @Override
    protected void visit(BaseNode root, final RuleContext ctx) {
        // this 'visit' is executed on each one of the source code files under
        analysis
        TreeNode.on(root).accept(new NodeVisitor() {
            public void visit(BaseNode node) {
                // this 'visit' is executed on each one of the nodes in the AST of
                the current file under analysis
                // ...
            }
        });
    }
}
```

We can apply the same strategy, using the *NodeVisitor* objects (*com.als.core.ast.NodeVisitor*), to any subtree within the tree we are dealing with:

Applying *Visitor*:



With *ASTSwitcher* (*com.optimyth.qaking.highlevelapi.ast.util.ASTSwitcher*) utility, we can convert low-level nodes into high-level ones and vice versa.

Low-Level AST <--> High-Level AST conversion

```
protected void visit (BaseNode root, final RuleContext ctx) {
    TreeNode lowLevelNode = TreeNode.on(root); // BaseNode to TreeNode
    TreeNode highLevelNode = ASTSwitcher.getHighLevelNode(lowLevelNode);
    lowLevelNode = ASTSwitcher.getLowLevelNode(highLevelNode);
}
```