

Administrivia

- Homework 4 on the Web; due next Monday.

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Strings in C — Recap

- Many languages have nice ways of working with text (character strings). What C provides is — no surprise — somewhat more primitive: In C, strings are arrays of `chars`, with the convention that the actual text of interest is followed by a null character (8-bit zero, represented in code as `'\0'`).
- The standard library does have some useful functions for working with strings and characters.

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Another Way to Get Input — Command-Line Arguments

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- Now that we know about arrays, pointers, and text strings, we can talk about command-line arguments. What are they? text that comes after the name of the program on the command line (e.g., when you write `gcc -Wall myprogram.c`, there are two command-line arguments), possibly modified by the shell (e.g., for filename wildcards).
- Most programming languages provide a way to access this text, often via some sort of argument to the main function/method.

Command-Line Arguments in C

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- In C, command-line arguments are passed to `main` as an array of text strings. So if you define `main` as

```
int main(int argc, char * argv[]) { .... }
```

`argc` is the number of arguments, plus one, and `argv` is an array of strings containing the arguments.
(“Plus one”? yes, `argv[0]` is something system-dependent, often the path for the program’s executable.)
- What if you want to get numeric input? you must convert string pointed to by `argv[i]` to the type you want, e.g., with `atoi` or `strtol`.

Command-Line Arguments and UNIX Shells

- Be aware that most UNIX shells do some preliminary parsing and conversion of what you type — e.g., splitting it up into “words”, expanding wildcards, etc., etc.
- If you don't want that — enclose in quotation marks or use escape character (backslash).

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Simple Examples

- Program to echo command-line arguments and do some simple things with them.

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I/O in C — Review

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- `getchar` and `putchar` provide simple character-at-a-time I/O to standard input/output.
- `printf` and `scanf` provide more sophisticated functionality, but again for standard input/output.
- I/O redirection provides one way to work with files. Is there something more general? Yes

Sidebar — Input/Output Redirection in UNIX/Linux

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- In programming classes I talk about “reading from standard input” rather than “reading from the keyboard”, and “writing to standard output” (or “writing to standard error”) rather than “writing to the screen”.
- What's the difference?

I/O Redirection, Continued

- `stdin` (standard input) can come from keyboard, file, or from another program or shell script.
- `stdout` and `stderr` (standard output, error) can go to terminal or file (overwrite or append), separately or together.

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I/O Redirection, Continued

- For example — to redirect output of `ls` to `ls.out`, type
`ls >ls.out`
(Overwrites `ls.out`. To append, replace `>` with `>>`.)
To also redirect any error messages, append `2>&1`.
- To redirect input, use `<infile`.

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Streams

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- C's notion of file I/O is based on the notion of a *stream* — a sequence of characters/bytes. Streams can be *text* (characters arranged into lines separated by something platform-dependent) or *binary* (any kind of bytes). UNIX/Linux doesn't make a distinction, but some other operating systems do.
- An input stream is a sequence of characters/bytes coming into your program (think of characters being typed at the console).
- An output stream is a sequence of characters/bytes produced by your program (think of characters being printed to the screen, including special characters such as the one for going to the next line).

Streams in C

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- In C, streams are represented by the type `FILE *` — i.e., a pointer to a `FILE`, which is something defined in `stdio.h`.
- A few streams are predefined — `stdin` for standard input, `stdout` for standard output, `stderr` for standard error (also output, but distinct from `stdout` so you can separate normal output from error messages if you want to).
- To create other streams ...

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Creating Streams in C

- To create a stream connected with a file — `fopen`.
- Parameters, from its man page:
 - First parameter is the name of the file, as a C string.
 - Second parameter is how we want to access the file – read or write, overwrite or append — plus a `b` for binary files, also a string.
 - Return value is a `FILE *` — a somewhat mysterious thing, but one we can pass to other functions. If `NULL`, the open did not succeed. (Can you think of reasons this might happen?)

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Working With Streams in C

- To read from an input stream — `fscanf`, almost identical to `scanf`. To write to an output stream — `fprintf`, almost identical to `printf`. `fgetc` and `fputc` provide single-character input and output.
- When done with a stream, `fclose` to tidy up. (Particularly important for output files, which otherwise may not be completely written out.)

Reading Text Strings

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- Getting text-string input is surprisingly tricky. `scanf` (or `fscanf`) seems like an obvious choice, but:
 - it can't read a string that includes blanks, and
 - it has no nice way to limit the number of characters read to the size of the array being read into.
- Getting a whole line is probably better. `gets ()` is an obvious/simple choice for reading from standard input, but it also has no way to limit how much is read. `fgets ()` is better. (Look at its man page.)
(Also notice `puts ()` — simple way to write out a text string.)

Minute Essay

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- Can you think of situations in which I/O redirection would be useful?

Minute Essay Answer

- There are several, possibly many. One is for program testing — you put the input in a file, run the program with input redirected to come from that file, and capture the output. If you later change the program, you can easily determine whether it still produces the same results, by capturing output again and comparing (e.g., with `diff`) to the old output.

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