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Would someone be kind enough to explain to me why using a `String` in this script does not work but `&str` does. Additionally how can I modify it so that it will work with `String`'s? [version 1.2]

```
use std::collections::HashMap;

fn main() {

    let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
    hash.insert("this", "value");
    let l: &str = "this is a borrowed string reference";
    // If the above line was defined as:
    //let l: String = "this is a string".to_string();

    let mut all = l.split(" ");
    let name: &str = all.next().unwrap();

    if hash.contains_key(name) == true {
        hash.remove(name);
    } else {
        hash.insert(name, "stuff");
    }
}
```

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[edited Aug 20, 2015 at 13:58](#)

asked Aug 20, 2015 at 13:44

[kezzos](#)

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`String where?` There's four different places `&str` could be replaced with `String`, all with different reasons why it may or may not work. Do you mean just changing the type of `l`?

DK. – [DK.](#)

2015-08-20 13:53:12 +00:00

Commented Aug 20, 2015 at 13:53

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Ok, let's boil this down to just the necessities:

```
use std::collections::HashMap;

fn main() {
    let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
    hash.insert("this", "value");
    let l: String = "this is a borrowed string reference".to_string();
    hash.insert(&l, "stuff");
}
```

Compiling this gives us:

```

<anon>:7:18: 7:19 error: `l` does not live long enough
<anon>:7     hash.insert(&l, "stuff");
               ^
<anon>:4:49: 8:2 note: reference must be valid for the block suffix following statement 0 at 4:48...
<anon>:4     let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
<anon>:5     hash.insert("this", "value");
<anon>:6     let l: String = "this is a borrowed string reference".to_string();
<anon>:7     hash.insert(&l, "stuff");
<anon>:8 }

<anon>:6:71: 8:2 note: ...but borrowed value is only valid for the block suffix following statement 2 at 6:70
<anon>:6     let l: String = "this is a borrowed string reference".to_string();
<anon>:7     hash.insert(&l, "stuff");
<anon>:8 }

```

Which tells you more or less *exactly* what it won't work. You try to insert a borrowed pointer to the `String l` into the hashmap. However, the `String` simply doesn't live long enough.

Specifically, values are destroyed by Rust in reverse lexical order. So, when execution gets to the end of the function, Rust will deallocate `l first`, followed by `hash`. This is a problem: it means that there is a window during which `hash` contains pointers to destroyed data, which Rust absolutely *will not allow*.

The reason this works with a `&str` is that a string literal "like this" is not merely `&str`; it's actually `&'static str`. This means that a string literal "lives" for the entire duration of the program: it *never* gets destroyed, thus it's safe for the hashmap to hold a pointer to it.

The solution is to ensure the `String` will outlive the `HashMap`:

```

use std::collections::HashMap;

fn main() {
    // Declare `l` here ...
    let l;
    let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
    hash.insert("this", "value");

    // ... but initialise it *here*.
    l = "this is a borrowed string reference".to_string();
    hash.insert(&l, "stuff");
}

```

Now, `hash` gets destroyed *first*, followed by `l`. It's fine to leave a variable uninitialised, so long as you *do* initialise it prior to reading or using it.

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answered Aug 20, 2015 at 14:06

[DK.](#)

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kezzos

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Thanks I was really stumped there for a while, that makes it very clear!

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flogram_dev

[flogram_dev Over a year ago](#)

"values are destroyed by Rust in reverse lexical order" – Umm no, they're destroyed in reverse order of *declaration*: [is.gd/LEBmOj](#)

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"lexical" as in the order they appear lexically; i.e. in the text.

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If you change `l` to `String` you get:

```
error: l does not live long enough
```

Which is true:

name is a reference to one of the substrings of `l`. You're possibly inserting the `name` reference to `hash`, but the lifetime of `hash` is longer than the lifetime of `l`. Therefore when the lifetime of `l` ends, `hash` would contain invalid references. This is not allowed. F.ex. if you remove the `insert` line, Rust is happy.

There are multiple ways to fix it, depending on your needs. One of them would be to make the lifetime of `hash` shorter than the lifetime of `l`, by instantiating `hash` after `l`:

```
use std::collections::HashMap;

fn main() {
    // let l: &str = "this is a borrowed string reference";
    // If the above line was defined as:
    let l: String = "this is a string".to_string();

    let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
    hash.insert("this", "value");

    let mut all = l.split(" ");
    let name: &str = all.next().unwrap();

    if hash.contains_key(name) == true {
        hash.remove(name);
    } else {
        hash.insert(name, "stuff");
    }
}
```

Or, you could store copies of the strings in the map.

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[edited Aug 20, 2015 at 14:22](#)

answered Aug 20, 2015 at 14:07

[flogram_dev](#)

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You have a lifetime issue.

Any object inserted into `hash` must only reference things that outlive `hash` (or not reference anything at all).

However, here, you define `l` after `hash` and therefore `l` has a shorter lifetime. In turn this means that `name` which references `l`'s buffer has a shorter lifetime than `hash` and thus `name` is not suitable to be inserted into `hash` (though it can be used to search/remove).

Switching the order in which `l` and `hash` are defined make it work:

```
use std::collections::HashMap;

fn main() {
```

```
let l: String = "this is a string".to_string();

let mut hash = HashMap::<&str, &str>::new();
hash.insert("this", "value");

let mut all = l.split(" ");
let name: &str = all.next().unwrap();

if hash.contains_key(name) == true {
    hash.remove(name);
} else {
    hash.insert(name, "stuff");
}
}
```

If this is not possible, then use a `HashMap<String, String>` to avoid lifetime issues.

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answered Aug 20, 2015 at 14:08

[Matthieu M.](#)

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