Preprocessor directives

Preprocessor directives are lines included in the code of programs preceded by a hash sign (#). These lines are not program statements but directives for the *preprocessor*. The preprocessor examines the code before actual compilation of code begins and resolves all these directives before any code is actually generated by regular statements.

These *preprocessor directives* extend only across a single line of code. As soon as a newline character is found, the preprocessor directive is ends. No semicolon (;) is expected at the end of a preprocessor directive. The only way a preprocessor directive can extend through more than one line is by preceding the newline character at the end of the line by a backslash (\).

macro definitions (#define, #undef)

To define preprocessor macros we can use `#define`. Its syntax is:

```
#define identifier replacement
```

When the preprocessor encounters this directive, it replaces any occurrence of `identifier` in the rest of the code by `replacement`. This `replacement` can be an expression, a statement, a block or simply anything. The preprocessor does not understand C++ proper, it simply replaces any occurrence of `identifier` by `replacement`.

```
#define TABLE_SIZE 100
int table1[TABLE_SIZE];
int table2[TABLE_SIZE];
```

After the preprocessor has replaced `TABLE_SIZE`, the code becomes equivalent to:

```
int table1[100];
int table2[100];
```

`#define` can work also with parameters to define function macros:

```
#define getmax(a,b) a>b?a:b
```

This would replace any occurrence of `getmax` followed by two arguments by the replacement expression, but also replacing each argument by its identifier, exactly as you would expect if it was a function:

```
// function macro
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;

#define getmax(a,b) ((a)>(b)?(a):(b))

int main()
{
  int x=5, y;
  y= getmax(x,2);
  cout << y << endl;
  cout << getmax(7,x) << endl;
  return 0;
}
```

```
5
7
```

Defined macros are not affected by block structure. A macro lasts until it is undefined with the `#undef` preprocessor directive:

```
#define TABLE_SIZE 100
int table1[TABLE_SIZE];
#undef TABLE_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 200
int table2[TABLE_SIZE];
```

This would generate the same code as:

```
int table1[100];
int table2[200];
```

Function macro definitions accept two special operators (# and ##) in the replacement sequence:
The operator #, followed by a parameter name, is replaced by a string literal that contains the argument passed (as if enclosed between double quotes):

```
#define str(x) #x
cout << str(test);
```

This would be translated into:

```
cout << "test";
```

The operator ## concatenates two arguments leaving no blank spaces between them:

```
#define glue(a,b) a ## b
glue(c,out) << "test";
```

This would also be translated into:

```
cout << "test";
```

Because preprocessor replacements happen before any C++ syntax check, macro definitions can be a tricky feature. But, be careful: code that relies heavily on complicated macros become less readable, since the syntax expected is on many occasions different from the normal expressions programmers expect in C++.

Conditional inclusions (#ifdef, #ifndef, #if, #endif, #else and #elif)

These directives allow to include or discard part of the code of a program if a certain condition is met.

`#ifdef` allows a section of a program to be compiled only if the macro that is specified as the parameter has been defined, no matter which its value is. For example:

```
#ifdef TABLE_SIZE
int table[TABLE_SIZE];
#endif
```

In this case, the line of code `int table[TABLE_SIZE];` is only compiled if `TABLE_SIZE` was previously defined with `#define`, independently of its value. If it was not defined, that line will not be included in the program compilation.

`#ifndef` serves for the exact opposite: the code between `#ifndef` and `#endif` directives is only compiled if the specified identifier has not been previously defined. For example:

```
#ifndef TABLE_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 100
#endif
int table[TABLE_SIZE];
```

In this case, if when arriving at this piece of code, the `TABLE_SIZE` macro has not been defined yet, it would be defined to a value of 100. If it already existed it would keep its previous value since the `#define` directive would not be executed.

The `#if`, `#else` and `#elif` (i.e., "else if") directives serve to specify some condition to be met in order for the portion of code they surround to be compiled. The condition that follows `#if` or `#elif` can only evaluate constant expressions, including macro expressions. For example:

```
#if TABLE_SIZE>200
#undef TABLE_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 200

#elif TABLE_SIZE<50
#undef TABLE_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 50

#else
#undef TABLE_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 100
#endif

int table[TABLE_SIZE];
```

Notice how the entire structure of `#if`, `#elif` and `#else` chained directives ends with `#endif`.

The behavior of `#ifdef` and `#ifndef` can also be achieved by using the special operators `defined` and `!defined` respectively in any `#if` or `#elif` directive:

```
#if defined ARRAY_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE ARRAY_SIZE
#elif !defined BUFFER_SIZE
#define TABLE_SIZE 128
#else
#define TABLE_SIZE BUFFER_SIZE
#endif
```

Line control (#line)

When we compile a program and some error happens during the compiling process, the compiler shows an error message with references to the name of the file where the error happened and a line number, so it is easier to find the code generating the error.

The `#line` directive allows us to control both things, the line numbers within the code files as well as the file name that we want that appears when an error takes place. Its format is:

```
#line number "filename"
```

Where `number` is the new line number that will be assigned to the next code line. The line numbers of successive lines will be increased one by one from this point on.

`"filename"` is an optional parameter that allows to redefine the file name that will be shown. For example:

```
#line 20 "assigning variable"
int a?;
```

This code will generate an error that will be shown as error in file `"assigning variable"`, line 20.

Error directive (#error)

This directive aborts the compilation process when it is found, generating a compilation error that can be specified as its parameter:

```
#ifndef __cplusplus
#error A C++ compiler is required!
#endif
```

This example aborts the compilation process if the macro name `__cplusplus` is not defined (this macro name is defined by default in all C++ compilers).

Source file inclusion (#include)

This directive has been used assiduously in other sections of this tutorial. When the preprocessor finds an `#include` directive it replaces it by the entire content of the specified header or file. There are two ways to use `#include`:

```
#include <header>
#include "file"
```

In the first case, a *header* is specified between angle-brackets `<>`. This is used to include headers provided by the implementation, such as the headers that compose the standard library (`iostream`, `string`,...). Whether the headers are actually files or exist in some other form is *implementation-defined*, but in any case they shall be properly included with this directive.

The syntax used in the second `#include` uses quotes, and includes a *file*. The *file* is searched for in an *implementation-defined* manner, which generally includes the current path. In the case that the file is not found, the compiler interprets the directive as a *header* inclusion, just as if the quotes (`""`) were replaced by angle-brackets (`<>`).

Pragma directive (#pragma)

This directive is used to specify diverse options to the compiler. These options are specific for the platform and the compiler you use. Consult the manual or the reference of your compiler for more information on the possible parameters that you can define with `#pragma`.

If the compiler does not support a specific argument for `#pragma`, it is ignored - no syntax error is generated.

Predefined macro names

The following macro names are always defined (they all begin and end with two underscore characters, _):

macro	value
`__LINE__`	Integer value representing the current line in the source code file being compiled.
`__FILE__`	A string literal containing the presumed name of the source file being compiled.
`__DATE__`	A string literal in the form "Mmm dd yyyy" containing the date in which the compilation process began.
`__TIME__`	A string literal in the form "hh:mm:ss" containing the time at which the compilation process began.
`__cplusplus`	An integer value. All C++ compilers have this constant defined to some value. Its value depends on the version of the standard supported by the compiler: • **`199711L`**: ISO C++ 1998/2003 • **`201103L`**: ISO C++ 2011 Non conforming compilers define this constant as some value at most five digits long. Note that many compilers are not fully conforming and thus will have this constant defined as neither of the values above.
`__STDC_HOSTED__`	`1` if the implementation is a *hosted implementation* (with all standard headers available) `0` otherwise.

The following macros are optionally defined, generally depending on whether a feature is available:

macro	value
`__STDC__`	In C: if defined to `1`, the implementation conforms to the C standard. In C++: Implementation defined.
`__STDC_VERSION__`	In C: • **`199401L`**: ISO C 1990, Ammendment 1 • **`199901L`**: ISO C 1999 • **`201112L`**: ISO C 2011 In C++: Implementation defined.
`__STDC_MB_MIGHT_NEQ_WC__`	`1` if multibyte encoding might give a character a different value in character literals
`__STDC_ISO_10646__`	A value in the form `yyyymmL`, specifying the date of the Unicode standard followed by the encoding of `wchar_t` characters
`__STDCPP_STRICT_POINTER_SAFETY__`	`1` if the implementation has *strict pointer safety* (see `get_pointer_safety`)
`__STDCPP_THREADS__`	`1` if the program can have more than one thread

Particular implementations may define additional constants.

For example:

```
1  // standard macro names
2  #include <iostream>
3  using namespace std;
4
5  int main()
6  {
7    cout << "This is the line number " << __LINE__;
8    cout << " of file " << __FILE__ << ".\n";
9    cout << "Its compilation began " << __DATE__;
10   cout << " at " << __TIME__ << ".\n";
11   cout << "The compiler gives a __cplusplus value of " << __cplusplus;
12   return 0;
13 }
```

```
This is the line number 7 of file /home/jay/stdmacronames.cpp.
Its compilation began Nov  1 2005 at 10:12:29.
The compiler gives a __cplusplus value of 1
```

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