Gradle Guides (https://guides.gradle.org)

Building C Executables

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What you'll build

This guide demonstrates how to create a minimalist C executable using Gradle's `c` plugin.

What you'll need

- About 6 minutes
- A text editor

- A command prompt
- The Java Development Kit (JDK), version 1.7 or higher
- A Gradle distribution (https://gradle.org/install), version 3.5 or better
- An installed C compiler. See which C tool chains (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/native_software.html#native-binaries:tool-chain-support) are supported by Gradle and whether you have to do any installation configuration (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/native_software.html#sec:tool_chain_installation) for your platform.

Layout

The first step is to create a folder for the new project and add a Gradle Wrapper (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/gradle_wrapper.html#sec:wrapper_generation) to the project.

```
$ mkdir c-executable
$ cd c-executable
$ gradle wrapper  1

:wrapper

BUILD SUCCESSFUL
```

1 This allows a version of Gradle to be locked to a project and henceforth you can use `./gradlew` instead of `gradle`.

Create a minimalist `build.gradle` file with the following content:

build.gradle

GROOVY

```
apply plugin : 'c'  1

model {  2
    components {
        main(NativeExecutableSpec)   3  4
    }
}
```

1. C projects are enabled via the `c` plugin
2. All native build definitions are done within a `model` block.
3. A native executable component is defined by a name - `main` in this case. This will determine the default location of source code, as well as the final name of the executable.
4. An executable is specified by using NativeExecutableSpec (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/dsl/org.gradle.nativeplatform.NativeExecutableSpec.html).

If you run

```
$ ./gradlew tasks
```

you will see in the output that Gradle has added a number of tasks

```
installMainExecutable - Installs a development image of executable 'main:executable'
mainExecutable - Assembles executable 'main:executable'.

Build Dependents tasks
----------------------
assembleDependentsMain - Assemble dependents of native executable 'main'.
assembleDependentsMainExecutable - Assemble dependents of executable 'main:executable'.
buildDependentsMain - Build dependents of native executable 'main'.
buildDependentsMainExecutable - Build dependents of executable 'main:executable'.
```

Note the use of `Main` in the task names which are a direct deriviative of the component being called `main`.

Add source code

By convention, C projects in Gradle will follow a more contemporary layout. This can be troublesome for you if you are used to building C code with build tools that do not use a convention-over-configuration approach. Rest assured that Gradle is very configurable in this regard and should you need to migrate a C project to Gradle you can consult the C sources (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/native_software.html#sec:c_sources) section of the User Guide.

In the `build.gradle` you have previsouly defined the executable component to be called `main`. By convention, this will means that Gradle will look in `src/main/c` for source files and non-exported header files. Create this folder

```
$ mkdir -p src/main/c
```

and place a `main.c` an a `greeting.h` within.

src/main/c/main.c

C

```
#include <stdio.h>   1
#include "greeting.h"  2

int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    printf( "%s\n", GREETING_STRING);
    return 0;
}
```

1 The standard C headers wil be located via the compiler toolchain that Gradle uses

2 Non-exported headers will be searched for relative to the specified C source folders. (In this case `src/main/c`).

src/main/c/greeting.h

C

```
#ifndef GRADLE_GUIDE_EXAMPLE_GREETING_H__
#define GRADLE_GUIDE_EXAMPLE_GREETING_H__

#define GREETING_STRING "Hello, World"

#endif
```

Build your project

To build your project you can simply do `./gradlew build` as per usual, but if you specifically want to build the executable, run the task that Gradle has created for you:

```
$ ./gradlew mainExecutable

:compileMainExecutableMainC  1
:linkMainExecutable  2
:mainExecutable

BUILD SUCCESSFUL
```

1. To keep things tidy on the console, Gradle does not display compiler output. If you need to ever diagnose a compilation issue, the output from the compiler is stored in `build/tmp/compileMainExecutableMainC/output.txt`.
2. In a similar fashion the output from the linker is written to `build/tmp/linkMainExecutable/output.txt`

Look inside the `build` folder and you will notice the appearance of a `exe` folder. By convention Gradle will place all executables in subfolders named according to the component name. In this case you will find your assembled executable in `build/exe/main` and it will be called `main` (or `main.exe` under Windows).

Now run your newly built executable.

```
$ ./build/exe/main/main

Hello World
```

Congratulations! You have just built a C executable with Gradle.

Summary

You have created an C project that can be used as a foundation for something more substantial. In the process you saw:

- How to create a build script for C executables.

- Where to add source code by convention.
- How to build the executable without building the full project.

Next Steps

- Testing using CUnit (http://cunit.sourceforge.net) or GoogleTest (https://github.com/google/googletest) is supported. Gradle will respectively create a matching CUnitTestSuiteSpec (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/dsl/org.gradle.nativeplatform.test.cunit.CUnitTestSuiteSpec.html) or GoogleTestTestSuiteSpec (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/dsl/org.gradle.nativeplatform.test.googletest.GoogleTestTestSuiteSpec.html) component for the executable you have defined in this guide. See the CUnit support (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/native_software.html#native_binaries:cunit) and GoogleTest support (https://docs.gradle.org/3.5/userguide/native_software.html#native_binaries:google_test) sections in the User Guide for more details.
- As there is no 'standard' way of creating documentation for C projects, the `c` plugin does not offer a task to generate documentation. If you do use the popular Doxygen (http://www.stack.nl/~dimitri/doxygen) tool for documenting C code, you may want to have a look at the Doxygen plugin (https://plugins.gradle.org/plugin/org.ysb33r.doxygen) for Gradle

Help improve this guide

Have feedback or a question? Found a typo? Like all Gradle guides, help is just a GitHub issue away. Please add an issue or pull request to gradle-guides/building-c-executables (https://github.com/gradle-guides/building-c-executables/) and we'll get back to you.

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