

C++: Header Files

Header File - Overview

Break up large files, Speeds compilation process

Organizes code

Separates interface from implementation
(and reduces your need to know what goes on 'under the hood')

But adds slight complexity

Header File Rules –

1. YOU MUST USE INCLUDE GUARDS

```
//a.h
const int myInt=3;
//main.h
#include "a.h" //define myInt here
#include "a.h" //attempt to redefine
               //error C2370
```

No include guards you
get multiply defined
symbols

Instead wrap in an include guard

```
//a.h
#ifndef MY_UNIQUEID //if not included yet
#define MY_UNIQUEID //then define this symbol
                   //and include the const def
                   //next time included,
                   //MY_UNIQUEID defined
                   //so const def not included

const int myInt=3;
#endif
```

VC++ uses

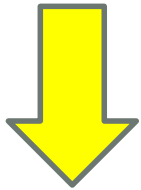
```
//a.h
#pragma once //only once
const int myInt=3;
```

Upshot:: ALWAYS USE INCLUDE GUARDS ON HEADERS

Header File Rules – Just declarations no definitions

declaration

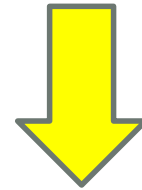
In .h file



```
int a2();
```

definition

In .cpp file



```
int a2(){  
    return 2;  
}
```

Header File Rules – minimal exposure

In .h file

Only include those files necessary to make header self contained (no compiler errors).

```
#pragma once
//B function definitions
#include <string>

std::string b1();
std::string b2();

std::string b3();
```

In .cpp file

All other includes

Header File General Rules

- `<>` for system header files
- `"` for your header files
- Only const variables (unless part of a class)
- Header file should contain only related stuff
- Never include a .cpp or source file (.h files only)
- Never put a “using namespace ...” declaration in a header file (forces anyone including your header to also use that namespace)
- General strive for complete AND minimal (only what's necessary)

Includes should be sorted and grouped

```
#include <fstream>  
#include <iomanip>
```



System header
files first

```
#include "com/company/ui/PropertiesDialog.h"  
#include "com/company/ui/MainWindow.h"
```



Then user
header files

Include statements go at top of file only

Header Files – Location (eclipse)

- Big projects – Organization is key
- Source in one dir, Headers in another
 - Use relative paths (ex. `#include "../includes_usr/constants.h"`)
 - Or let IDE find headers by specifying which directories to search

