Reference variables

- Version 1: Dr. Ofir Pele
- Version 2: Dr. Miri Ben-Nissan
- Version 3: Dr. Erel Segal-Halevi

Why references?

```
// Wrong version
void swap(int a, int b) {
   int temp = a;
   a = b;
   b = temp;
}
int main() {
   int x=3, y=7;
   swap(x, y);
   // still x == 3, y == 7 !
}
```

```
// C version
void swap (int *a, int *b) {
   int t = *a;
   *a = *b;
   *b = t;
}; // swap(&x,&y)
```

```
// C++ version
void swap (int &a, int &b) {
   int t = a;
   a = b;
   b = t;
};  // swap(x,y)
```

References – two definitions

- (a) A pointer that is used like an object.
- (b) Alias - alternative name to existing object.

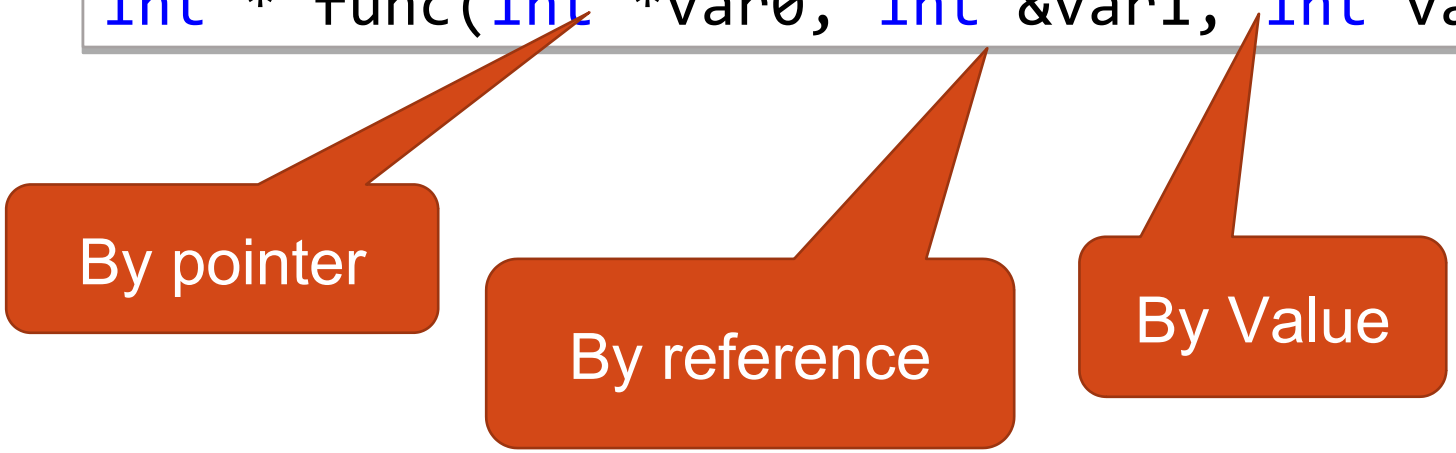
```
int i = 10;
int& j = i; // j is a int reference
            // initialized only
            // once !
j += 5; // changes both i and j
```

Pointer vs. Reference *(folder 1)*

	Pointer	**Reference**
Initialization	Optional	Mandatory
Dynamic	Yes	No
Arithmetic	Yes	No
Always defined	No	Yes
Notation	(*p), p->x	r, r.x
Containers	Yes	No

Three ways to pass arguments

```
int * func(int *var0, int &var1, int var2);
```



Lvalue & Rvalue

Lvalue = **Left Value –** can appear at left side of =.

= **Located Value –** has a fixed memory location.

Examples: variables, references …

Rvalue = not Left Value. Numbers, temporaries …

```
int a=1;
a=5; // Lvalue = Rvalue, Ok
a=a; // Lvalue = Lvalue, Ok
5=a; // Rvalue = Lvalue Comp. error
5=5; // Rvalue = Rvalue Comp. error
a+5=7;  // Temporary = Rvalue - Comp. error
f(5)=7; // RIDDLE: Is this legal?
```

Lvalue & Rvalue

Lvalue = **Left Value –** can appear at left side of =.

= **Located Value –** has a fixed memory location.

Examples: variables, references …

Rvalue = not Left Value. Numbers, temporaries …

```
int a=1;
a=5; // Lvalue = Rvalue, Ok
a=a; // Lvalue = Lvalue, Ok
5=a; // Rvalue = Lvalue Comp. error
5=5; // Rvalue = Rvalue Comp. error
a+5=7;  // Temporary = Rvalue - Comp. error
f(5)=7; // .. it depends: we will see soon.
```

R/L value and references

non-const Reference – only to a non const Lvalue.

const reference – to both Lvalue and Rvalue

```
int lv=1;
const int clv=2;
int& lvr1=lv;
int& lvr2=1+1; //error!
int& lvr3=clv;  //error! prevents lvr3++;
const int& cr1=clv;
const int& cr2=5+5; // This is useful for
                    // Functions arguments
```

Passing arguments by const reference

```
// Pass by value
void foo (int a)
{
   ...
}
// Pass by pointer
void foo (int *pa)
{
   ...
}
```

```
// pass by ref
void foo (int &a)
{
   ...
}

// pass by const ref
void foo (const int &a)
{
   ...
}
```

- Avoid copying objects
  without allowing changes in their value.

Parameter passing

By value	By reference	By const reference
void f (Point x) {…}	void f (Point& x) {…}	void f (const Point& x) {…}
x is copied	x is not copied	x is not copied
Compiler lets f modify x, but changes have no effect outside	f can modify x	compiler does not let f modify x

```
void add(Point& a, Point b)
{
   // a is reference, b is a copy
   a._x += b._x;
   a._y += b._y;
}

int main()
{
   Point p1(2,3), p2(4,5);
   add(p1,p2); // note: we don't send pointers!
            // p1 is now (6,8)
   ...
}
```

```
void add(Point& a, const Point& b)
{
    // a is reference,
    // b is a const ref
    a._x+= b._x;
    a._y+= b._y;
}

int main()
{
    Point p1(2,3), p2(4,5);
    add(p1,p2); // note: we dont send pointers!
          // p1 is now (6,8)
    ...
}
```

- b is Reference => is not copied
- b is Const => we can't change it
- Important for large objects!

Return a reference to variable *(folder 2)*

```
class Buffer
{
    size_t _length;
    int *_buf;
public:
    Buffer (size_t l) :
    _length (l),
    _buf (new int [l])
    {
    }
    int& get(size_t i)
    {
        return _buf[i];
    }
};
```

```
int main ()
{
    Buffer buf(5);
    buf.get(0)= 3;
    int& x = buf.get(0);
    x++;
}
```

Return a ref. to a legal variable (e.g. not on the function stack).

Return a reference from a function *(folder 2)*

- Don’t return a reference to a local variable.
- You can return a reference to a variable that will survive the function call, e.g:
  - A heap variable (allocated with new).
  - A variable from a lower part of the stack.
  - Globals.
  - Class members.
  - *this (Useful for call-chaining).

Call chaining

```
Point& add(Point& a, const Point& b) {
    a._x+=b._x;
    a._y+=b._y;
    return a;
}

int main() {
    Point p1(2,3), p2(4,5), p3(1,1);
    add(add(p1,p2),p3);              // now p1 is (7,9)
    cout << add(p1,p2).getX();       // note the syntax
    ...
}
```

Call chaining (2)

```
class Point {
   int x, y;
   Point& add (const Point& b) {
      a._x+=b._x;   a._y+=b._y;
      return *this;
   }
};
int main() {
   Point p1(2,3), p2(4,5), p3(1,1);
   p1.add(p2).add(p3);   // now p1 is (7,9)
   cout << p1.add(p2).getX();
   ...
}
```