DLint: Dynamically Checking Bad Coding Practices in JavaScript

Liang Gong¹, Michael Pradel², Manu Sridharan³ and Koushik Sen¹

¹ UC Berkeley ² TU Darmstadt ³ Samsung Research America



Why JavaScript?

- The RedMonk Programming Language Rankings (1st)
 - Based on GitHub and StackOverflow
- Web assembly language
- Web applications, DSL, Desktop App, Mobile App



























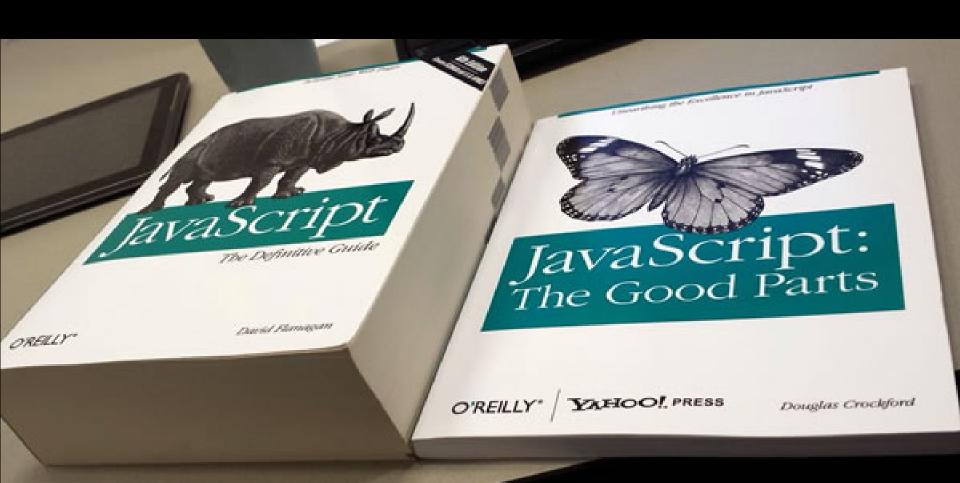


Problematic JavaScript

- Designed and Implemented in 10 days →
- Not all decisions were well thought ->
- Problematic language features
 - Error prone
 - Inefficient code
 - Security loophole
- Problematic features are retained
 - backward compatibility



Problematic JavaScript



What is coding practice?

- Good coding practices
 - informal rules
 - improve quality
- Better quality means:
 - Less correctness issues
 - Better performance
 - Better usability
 - Better maintainability
 - Less security loopholes
 - Less surprises
 - •

```
var sum = 0, value;
var array = [11, 22, 33];
for (value in array) {
    sum += value;
}
> sum ?
```

```
var sum = 0, value;
var array = [11, 22, 33];
for (value in array) {
    sum += value;
}
> sum ?
```

```
array index

11 + 22 + 33 => 66 (not array value)

0 + 1 + 2 => 3 array index : string

0+"0"+"1"+"2" => "0012"
```

```
var sum = 0, value;
var \ array = [11, 22, 33];
for (value in array) {
    sum += value;
> sum ?
```

```
array index
11 + 22 + 33 => 66 (not array value)
\theta + 1 + 2 \Rightarrow 3 array index : string
0+"0"+"1"+"2" => "0012"
```



Result depends on the Array prototype object

```
var sum = 0, value;
var array = [11, 22, 33];
for (value in array) {
    sum += value;
}
> sum ?
```

```
for (i=0; i < array.length; i++) {
    sum += array[i];
}

function addup(element, index, array) {
    sum += element;
}
    array.forEach(addup);</pre>
```

```
var sum = 0, value;
var \ array = [11, 22, 33];
for (value in array) {
   sum += value;
> sum ?
for (i=0; i < array.length; i++) {</pre>
   sum += array[i];
function addup(element, index, array) {
  sum += element;
```

array.forEach(addup);

Coding Practices and Lint Tools

Existing Lint-like checkers

- Inspect source code
- Rule-based checking
- Detect common mistakes
- Enforce coding conventions

• Limitations:

- Approximates behavior
- Unknown aliases
- Lint tools favor precision over soundness
- Difficulty: Precise static program analysis









DLint

- Dynamic Linter checking code quality rules for JS
- Open-source, robust and extensible framework
- Formalized and implemented 28 rules
 - Counterparts of static rules
 - Additional rules
- Empirical study
 - Compare static and dynamic checking

Jalangi: A Dynamic Analysis Framework for JavaScript

Koushik Sen, Swaroop Kalasapur, Tasneem Brutch, and Simon Gibbs

```
a.f = b.g \longrightarrow PutField(Read("a", a), "f", GetField(Read("b", b), "g"))

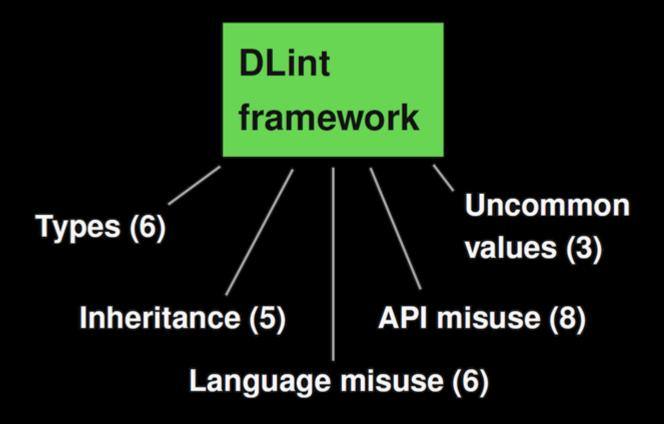
if (a.f()) ... \longrightarrow if (Branch(Method(Read("a", a), "f")()) ...

x = y + 1 \longrightarrow x = Write("x", Binary('+', Read("y", y), Literal(1))
```

```
analysis.Literal(c)
analysis.Read(n, x)
analysis.PutField(b, f, v)
analysis.Function(f, isConstructor)
analysis.Method(b, f, isConstructor)
analysis.Unary(op, x)
...
analysis.Branch(c)
analysis.Write(n, x)
analysis.Binary(op, x, y)
analysis.Function(f, isConstructor)
analysis.Unary(op, x)
```

Runtime Patterns

- Single-event: Stateless checking
- Multi-event: Stateful checking



Language Misuse

Avoid setting properties of primitives, which has no effect.

```
var fact = 42;
fact.isTheAnswer = true;
console.log(fact.isTheAnswer);
> undefined
```

DLint Checker Predicate:

 $propWrite(base, *, *) \land isPrim(base)$

Uncommon Values

Avoid producing NaN (Not a Number).



> NaN

DLint Checker Predicate:

$$unOp(*, val, NaN) \land val \neq NaN$$

 $binOp(*, left, right, NaN) \land left \neq NaN$
 $\land right \neq NaN$
 $call(*, *, args,NaN, *) \land NaN \neq args$

Uncommon Values

Avoid concatenating undefined to string.

```
var value;
...
var str = "price: ";
...
var result = str + value;
> "price: undefined"
```

DLint Checker Predicate:

```
binOp(+, left, right, res)
 \land (left = undefined \lor right = undefined)
 \land isString(res)
```

API Misuse

Beware that all wrapped primitives coerce to true.

```
var b = false;
if (new Boolean(b)) {
   console.log("true");
}
> true
```

DLint Checker Predicate:

```
cond(val) \land isWrappedBoolean(val) \land val.valueOf() = false
```

Table 1: Inheritance-related code quality rules and runtime patterns (all are single-event patterns).

ID	Name	Code quality rule	Runtime event predicate(s)
I1	Enumerable- ObjProps	Avoid adding enumerable properties to Object. Doing so affects every for-in loop.	$propWrite(Object,*,*) \ call(Object,f,args,*,*) \mid f.name = "defineProperty" \land args.length = 3 \land args[2].enumerable = true$
I2	Inconsistent- Constructor	x.constructor should yield the function that has created x.	$propRead(base, constructor, val) \mid val \neq \text{function that has created } base$
I3	NonObject- Prototype	The prototype of an object must be an object.	$propWrite(*,name,val) \mid name \in \{ "prototype", "_proto_" \} \land !isObject(val)$
I4	Overwrite- Prototype	Avoid overwriting an existing prototype, as it may break the assumptions of other code.	$propWrite(base, name, *) \mid name \in \{"prototype", "_proto_"\} \land base.name is a user-defined prototype before the write$
I5	Shadow- ProtoProp	Avoid shadowing a prototype property with an object property.	$propWrite(base, name, val) \mid val \text{ is defined in } base's \text{ prototype chain } \land !isFct(val) \land (base, name) \notin shadowingAllowed$

Table 2: Code quality rules and runtime patterns related to type errors.

ID	Name	Code quality rule	Runtime event predicate(s)				
Singl	$Single-event\ patterns:$						
T1	FunctionVs- Prim	Avoid comparing a function with a primitive.	$binOp(relOrEqOp, left, right, *) \mid isFct(left) \land isPrim(right) \\ binOp(relOrEqOp, left, right, *) \mid isPrim(left) \land isFct(right)$				
T2	StringAnd- Undefined	Avoid concatenating a string and undefined, which leads to a string containing "undefined".	$binOp(+, left, right, res) \mid (left = "undefined") \lor right = "undefined") \land isString(res)$				
Т3	ToString	toString must return a string.	$call(*, f, *, ret, *) \mid f.name = "toString" \land !isString(ret)$				
T4	Undefined- Prop	Avoid accessing the "undefined" property.	$propWrite(*, "undefined", *) \ propRead(*, "undefined", *)$				
Mult	Multi-event patterns:						
T5	Constructor- Functions	Avoid using a function both as constructor and as non-constructor.					
Т6	TooMany- Arguments	Pass at most as many arguments to a function as it expects.	$call(*,f,args,*,*) \mid args > f.length \land \\ \nexists varRead(arguments,*) during the call$				

Table 4: Code quality rules and runtime patterns related to incorrect API usage (single-event patterns).

ID	Name	Code quality rule	Runtime event predicate(s)
A1	Double- Evaluation	Avoid eval and other ways of runtime code injection.	$call(builtin, eval, *, *, *)$ $call(builtin, Function, *, *, *)$ $call(builtin, setTimeout, args, *, *) \mid isString(args[0])$ $call(builtin, setInterval, args, *, *) \mid isString(args[0])$ $call(document, f, *, *, *) \mid f.name = "write"$
A2	EmptyChar- Class	Avoid using an empty character class, [], in regular expressions, as it does not match anything.	$lit(val) \mid isRegExp(val) \land val \text{ contains "[]"} \\ call(builtin, RegExp, args, *, *) \mid isString(args[0]) \land args[0] \text{ contains "[]"} \\$
A3	FunctionTo- String	Avoid calling Function.toString(), whose behavior is platform-dependent.	$call(base, f, *, *, *) \mid f.name = "toString" \land isFct(base)$
A4	FutileWrite	Writing a property should change the property's value.	$propWrite(base, name, val) \mid base[name] \neq val \text{ after the write}$
A5	MissingRadix	Pass a radix parameter to parseInt, whose behavior is platform-dependent otherwise.	$call(builtin, parseInt, args, *, *) \mid args.length = 1$
A6	SpacesIn- Regexp	Prefer " {N}"2 over multiple consecutive empty spaces in regular expressions for readability.	$lit(val) \mid isRegExp(val) \land val \text{ contains "} $ " $call(builtin, RegExp, args, *, *) \mid args[0] \text{ contains "} $ "
A7	StyleMisuse	CSS objects are not strings and should not be used as if they were.	$binOp(eqOp, left, right) \mid isCSSObj(left) \land isString(right) \ binOp(eqOp, left, right) \mid isString(left) \land isCSSObj(right)$
A8	Wrapped- Primitives	Beware that all wrapped primitives coerce to true.	$cond(val) \mid isBooleanObj(val) \land val.valueOf() = false$

Table 3: Code quality rules and runtime patterns related to language misuse (all are single-event patterns).

ID	Name	Code quality rule	Runtime event predicate(s)
L1	Arguments- Variable	Avoid accessing non-existing properties of arguments.	$propRead(arguments, name, *) \mid name \notin argumentProps \\ propWrite(arguments, *, *) \\ call(arguments, f, *, *, *) \mid f.name = "concat"$
L2	ForInArray	Avoid for-in loops over arrays, both for efficiency and because it may include properties of Array.prototype.	$for In(val) \mid is Array(val)$
L3	GlobalThis	Avoid referring to this when it equals to global.	varRead(this, global)
L4	Literals	Use literals instead of new Object() and new Array() ¹	$call(builtin, f, args, *, *) \mid (f = Array \ \lor \ f = Object) \ \land \ args.length = 0$
L5	NonNumeric- ArrayProp	Avoid storing non-numeric properties in an array.	$\begin{array}{l} (propWrite(base,name,*) \ \lor \ propRead(base,name,*)) \ \ isArray(base) \ \land \\ !isNumeric(name) \ \land \ name \not \in arrayProps) \end{array}$
L6	PropOf- Primitive	Avoid setting properties of primitives, which has no effect.	$propWrite(base,*,*) \mid isPrim(base)$

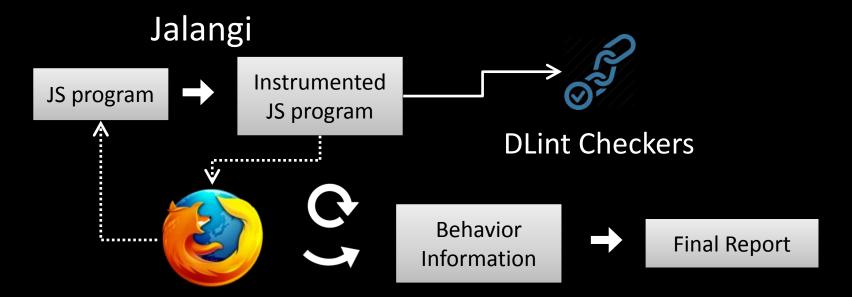
¹ Note that it is legitimate for performance reasons to call these constructors with arguments [24].

Table 5: Code quality rules and runtime patterns related to uncommon values (all are single-event patterns).

ID	Name	Code quality rule	Runtime event predicate(s)
V1	Float- Equality	Avoid checking the equality of similar floating point numbers, as it may lead to surprises due to rounding. ²	$binOp(eqOp, left, right, *) \mid isFloat(left) \land isFloat(right) \land left - right < \epsilon$
V2	NaN	Avoid producing NaN (not a number).	$unOp(*, val, NaN) \mid val \neq NaN \\ binOp(*, left, right, NaN) \mid left \neq NaN \land right \neq NaN \\ call(*, *, args, NaN, *) \mid NaN \notin args$
V3	Overflow- Underflow	Avoid numeric overflow and underflow.	$\begin{array}{l} unOp(*,val,\infty) \mid val \neq \infty \\ binOp(*,left,right,\infty) \mid left \neq \infty \ \land \ right \neq \infty \\ call(builtin,*,args,\infty,*) \mid \infty \notin args \end{array}$

² It is a notorious fact that the expression 0.1 + 0.2 === 0.3 returns false in JavaScript.

DLint Overview



- Instrument SpiderMonkey to intercept JavaScript files
- Transpile JavaScript code with Jalangi [Sen et al. FSE 2013]
- DLint checks runtime states and find issues
- Report reason and code location

Evaluation

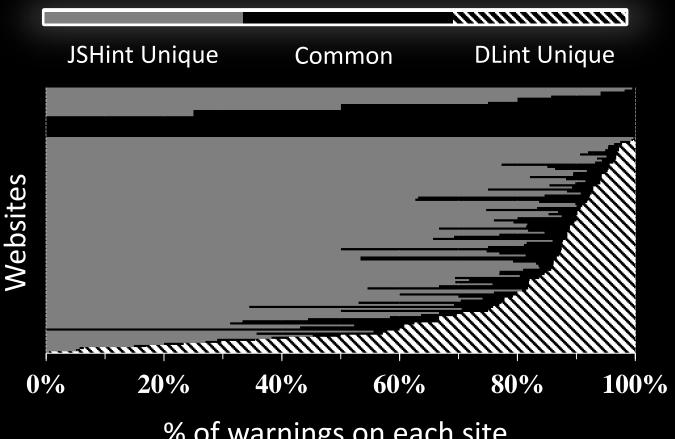
Research Questions

- DLint warning vs. JSHint warning?
- Additional warnings from DLint?
- Coding convention vs. page popularity?

Experimental Setup

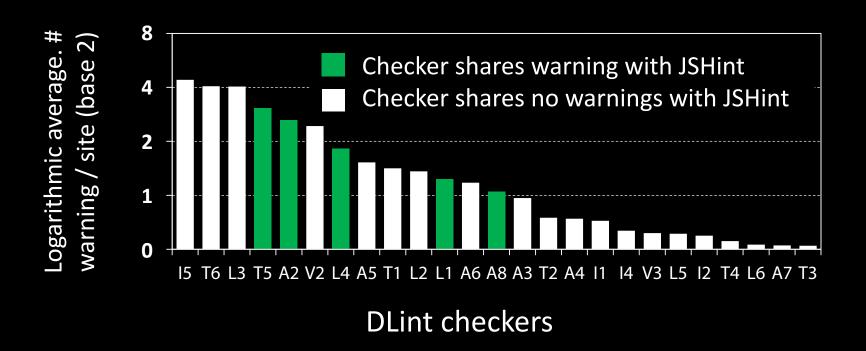
- 200 web sites (top 50 + others)
- Comparison to JSHint

% of Warnings: DLint vs. JSHint



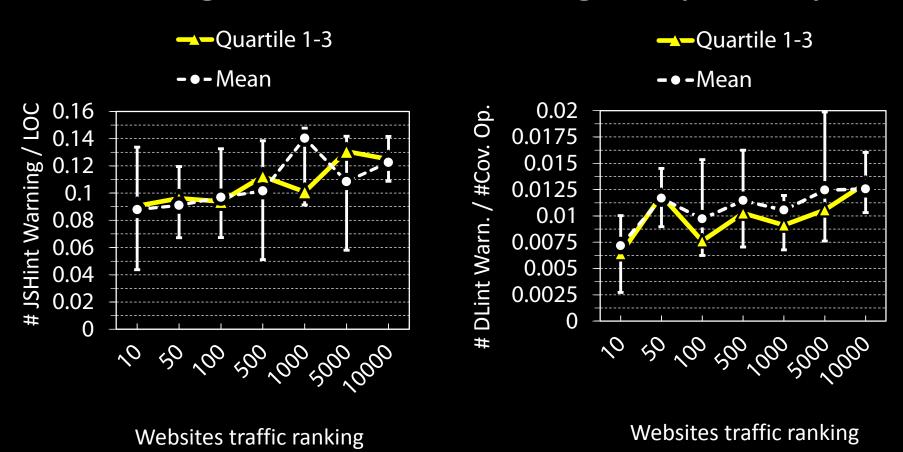
- % of warnings on each site
- Some sites: One approach finds all
- Most sites: Better together

Additional Warnings Reported by DLint



- 53 warnings per page
- 49 are missed by JSHint

Coding Convention vs. Page Popularity



Correlation between Alexa popularity and number of DLint warnings: 0.6





December				*		Next Month >>
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	\$undefined	Starting At \$129	\$169
\$149	Starting At \$149	Starting At \$129	31 \$499			

TOURS AMENITIES ATTRACTIONS US VISITORS SHUTTLE SERVICE FIREWORKS & ILLUMINATION GROUP SALES

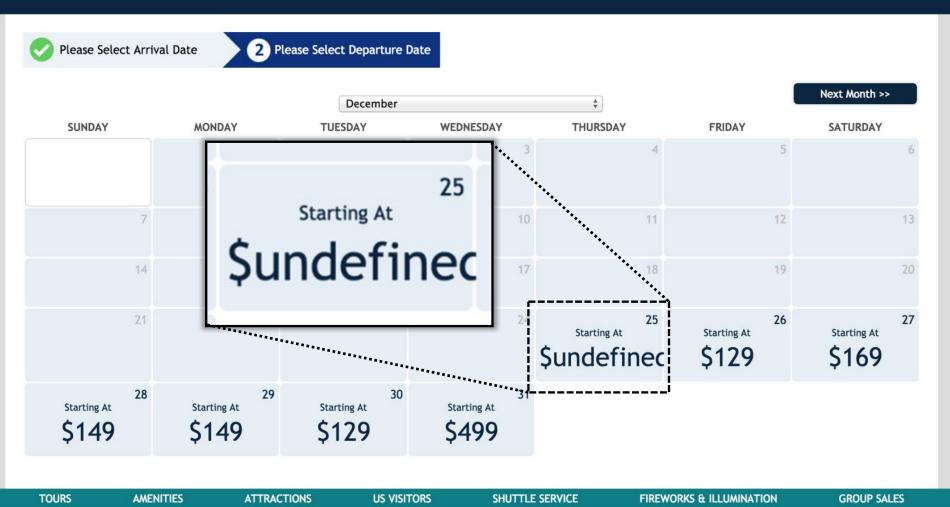














Insiders'
Select
2014







ALGOTFrame/6 wire baskets/top shelf
\$64

Last year's price: \$NaN



ALGOT
Frame/wire baskets/rod
\$204
Last year's price: \$220



ALGOT
Frame/4 wire baskets/top shelf
\$44
Last year's price: \$48



ALGOT
Frame/4 wire baskets/top shelf
\$60
Last year's price: \$NaN



ALGOTFrame/4 wire baskets
\$35

Last year's price: \$39



ALGOT Frame/4 wire baskets \$51 Last year's price: \$NaN



ALGOT
Frame/4 mesh baskets/top shelf
\$56
Last year's price: \$60



ALGOT
Frame with rod/wire baskets
\$74
Last year's price: \$87









Frame/4 wire baskets/top shelf

ALGOT Frame/6 wire baskets/top shelf

ALGOT Frame/wire baskets/rod

Frame/4 wire baskets/top shelf

\$60 Last year's price: \$NaN

ALGOT

Last year's price: \$NaN

\$64

ALGOT

Frame/4 wire baskets/top shelf

\$60

Last year's price: \$NaN

ALGOT

Frame/4 wire baskets

\$51

Last year's price: \$NaN

ALGOT

Frame/4 mesh baskets/top shelf

\$56

Last year's price: \$60

ALGOT

Frame with rod/wire baskets

\$74

Last year's price: \$87



Frame/4 wire baskets

\$35

Last year's price: \$39

Rule: avoid setting field on primitive values

From Google Octane Game Boy Emulator benchmark:

```
var decode64 = "";
if (dataLength > 3 && dataLength % 4 == 0) {
  while (index < dataLength) {
    decode64 += String.fromCharCode(...);
  }
  if (sixbits[3] >= 0x40) {
    decode64.length -= 1;
  }
}
```

Rule: avoid setting field on primitive values

From Google Octane Game Boy Emulator benchmark:

```
var decode64 = "";
if (dataLength > 3 && dataLength % 4 == 0) {
  while (index < dataLength) {
    decode64 += String.fromCharCode(...);
  }
  if (sixbits[3] >= 0x40) {
    decode64.length -= 1;
  }
}
```

No effect because decode64 is a primitive string.

Rule: avoid no effect operations



```
window.onbeforeunload=
"Twitch.player.getPlayer().pauseVideo();"

window.onunload=
"Twitch.player.getPlayer().pauseVideo();"
```

Rule: avoid no effect operations



```
window.onbeforeunload=
   "Twitch.player.getPlayer().pauseVideo();"

window.onunload=
   "Twitch.player.getPlayer().pauseVideo();"

window.onbeforeunload = function () {
    Twitch.player.getPlayer().pauseVideo();
}
```

Takeaways

Dynamic lint-like checking for JavaScript

- Static checkers are not sufficient, DLint complements
- DLint is a open-source, robust and extensible tool
 - Works on real-world websites
 - Found 19 clear bugs on most popular websites

More information:

- Paper: "DLint: Dynamically Checking Bad Coding Practices in JavaScript"
- Source Code: https://github.com/Berkeley-Correctness-Group/DLint
- Google "DLint Berkeley"

Takeaways

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Thanks!

Formalization: declarative specification

- 1. Predicates over runtime events
- $ullet propWrite(base,\ name,\ val)$
- $ullet propRead(base,\ name,\ val)$
- $ullet \ \ cond(val)$
- unOp(op, val, res)
- $ullet binOp(op,\ left,\ right,\ res)$
- ullet $call(base,\,f,\,args,\,ret,\,isConstr)$

Example:

```
\overline{propWrite(*, "myObject", val)} \ | \ isPrim(val)
```

Missing 'new' prefix when invoking a constructor.

eval can be harmful.

Implied eval (string instead of function as argument).

Do not override built-in variables.

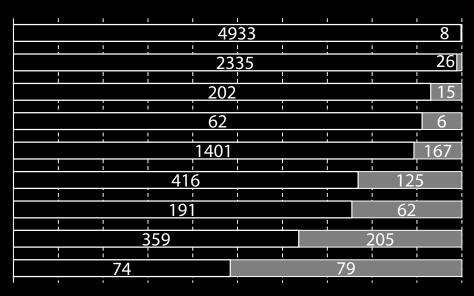
document.write can be a form of eval.

The array literal notation [] is preferable.

The object literal notation {} is preferable.

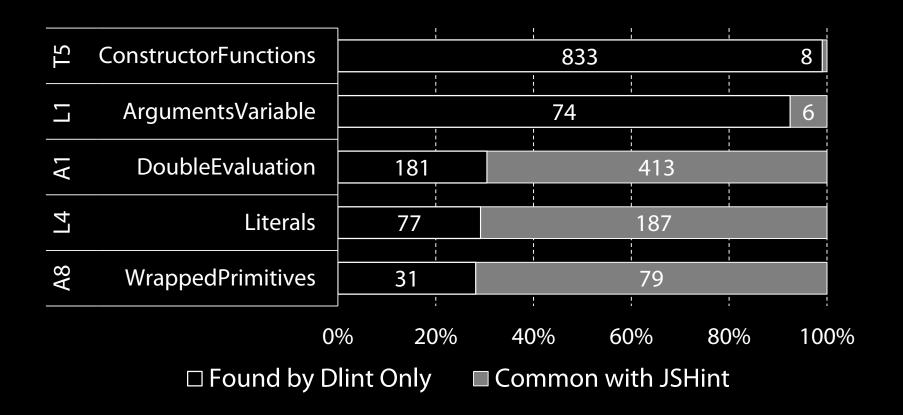
The Function constructor is a form of eval.

Do not use Number, Boolean, String as a constructor.



0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

☐ Fount by JSHint Only ☐ Common with DLint



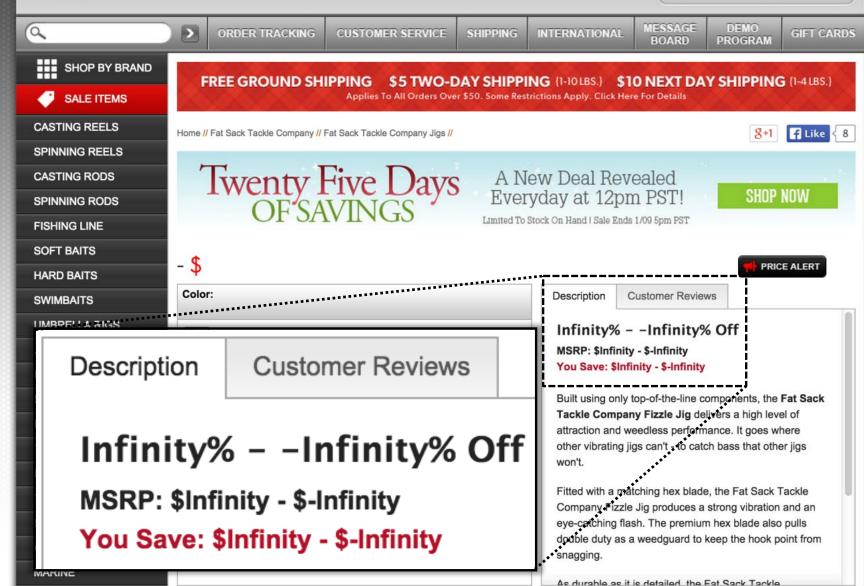
E.g., 181 calls of eval(), Function(), etc. missed by JSHint



O Available Colors

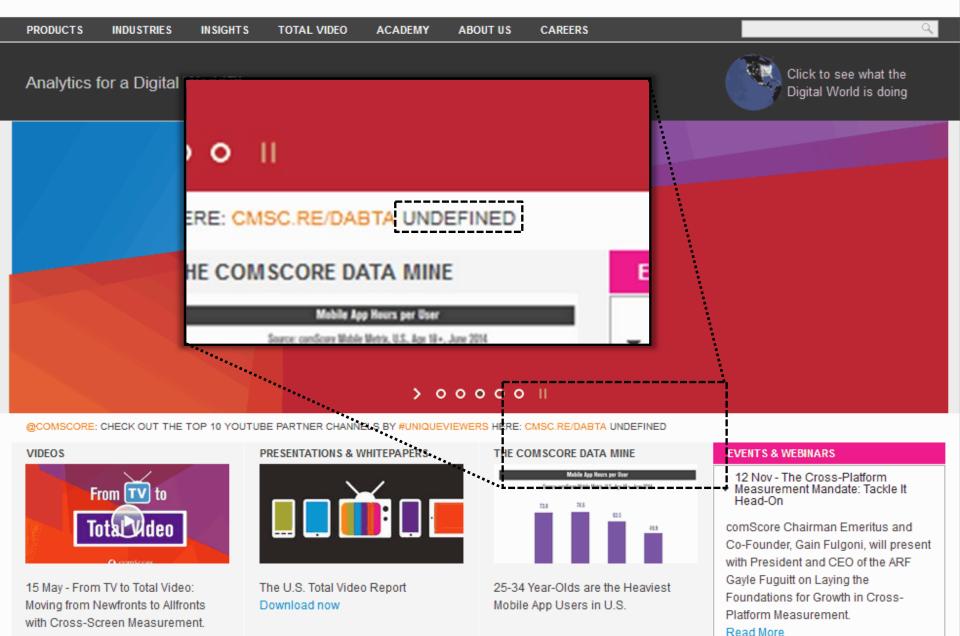
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APPAREL





- » Nato Watch Straps
- » Expansion Bands
- » Str
- » DA
- » Str
- » Straps for Omega
- » Straps for Bell & Ross
- » Watch Parts
- » Bands for Rolex
- » Bands for Tissot
- » Other

sizes

10 mm	12 mm	14 mm
15 mm	16 mm	18 mm
19 mm	20 mm	21 mm
22 mm	23 mm	24 mm
26 mm	28 mm	30 mm











hot sellers



StrapsCo Genuine Patent Leather Watch Strap Womens Band in Black

\$NaN



18mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN

buy now



20mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN



22mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN

buy now



Shark Mesh Watch Band Strap Breitling Navitimer Superocean 18mm

\$NaN

buy now



Matte Black PVD Shark Mesh Watch Band Strap fits Seiko 18mm 20mm

\$NaN

buy now



Yellow Gold PVD Shark Mesh Watch Band Strap fits Breitling 18mm 20mm

\$NaN

buy now



StrapsCo Expansion Watch Band Stainless Steel Strap sz 12mm

\$NaN

buy now

42

features

description

dimensions

shipping

returns

- » Nato Watch Straps
- » Expansion Bands
- » Str
- » DA

» Str

- » Straps for Omega
- » Straps for Bell & Ross
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StrapsCo Genuine Patent Leather Watch Strap Womens Band in Black

\$NaN

buy now



18mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN



20mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN

22mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN

buy now



Shark Mesh Watch Band Strap Breitling Navitimer Superocean 18mm

\$NaN

buy now



fits Seiko 18mm

\$NaN

buy now

18mm Shark Mesh Stainless Steel Watch Band Strap fits Breitling

\$NaN

\$NaN

buy now

o Expansion and Stainless rap sz 12mm

buy now



NaN case study for IKEA

Type Related Checker

Avoid accessing the undefined property.

```
var x; // undefined
var y = {};
y[x] = 23; // { undefined: 23 }

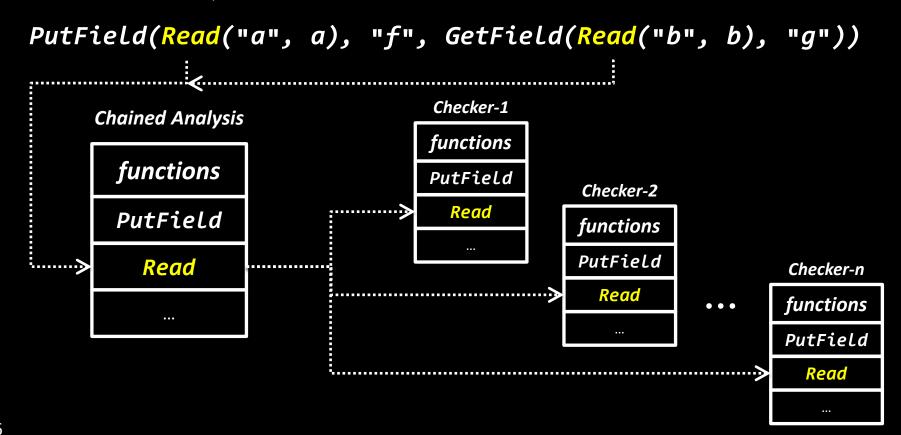
propWrite(*, "undefined",*)
propRead(*, "undefined", *)
```



Chained Analysis

$$a.f = b.g$$





Rule: avoid using *for..in* on arrays

www.google.com/chrome, included code from Modernizr:

```
for (i in props) { // props is an array
  prop = props[i];
  before = mStyle.style[prop];
  ...
}
```



https://github.com/Modernizr/Modernizr/pull/1419

API Misuse

var fun = eval;



eval is evil, do not use *eval*.

```
call(builtin, eval, *, *, *)
call(builtin, Function, *, *, *)
call(builtin,\ setTimeout,\ args,\ *,\ *)
    \mid isString(args[0])
call(builtin, setInterval, args, *, *)
    \mid isString(args[0])
call(document, write, *, *, *)
```

YOUR CONFERENCE PRESENTATION HOW YOU PLANNED IT: DESCRIBE INTRODUCE APPLAUSE OUTLINE YOURSELF ENGAGING OF TALK MOTIVATION RESULTS A-80 × 4 4 START 15 MINUTES METHODOLOGY AND CONCLUSIONS EXPERIMENT DESIGN HOW IT GOES: REALIZE YOU ONLY HAVE 3 MINUTES LEFT. ANNOYING AUDIENCE TECHNICAL POWER PREVIOUS MEMBER SPEAKER RUNS DIFFICULTIES INTERRUPTS FORGET THROUGH THE CONNECTING WITH SELF-LATE AND EATS INTRODUCING REST OF YOUR YOUR LAPTOP. AGGRANDIZING MOTIVA-INTO YOUR TIME. YOURSELF. 30 SLIDES. QUESTION. 15 MINUTES 1 1 START -TION SPEND WAAAY TOO MUCH TIME DESCRIBING AWKWARD YOUR OUTLINE. SILENCE Q&A.