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5.4 Naming Variables, Functions, and Files

The names of global variables and functions in a program serve as comments of a sort. So don't choose terse names—instead, look for names that give useful information about the meaning of the variable or function. In a GNU program, names should be English, like other comments.

Local variable names can be shorter, because they are used only within one context, where (presumably) comments explain their purpose.

Try to limit your use of abbreviations in symbol names. It is ok to make a few abbreviations, explain what they mean, and then use them frequently, but don't use lots of obscure abbreviations.

Please use underscores to separate words in a name, so that the Emacs word commands can be useful within them. Stick to lower case; reserve upper case for macros and enum constants, and for name-prefixes that follow a uniform convention.

For example, you should use names like `ignore_space_change_flag`; don't use names like `iCantReadThis`.

Variables that indicate whether command-line options have been specified should be named after the meaning of the option, not after the option-letter. A comment should state both the exact meaning of the option and its letter. For example,

```
/* Ignore changes in horizontal whitespace (-b). */
int ignore_space_change_flag;
```

When you want to define names with constant integer values, use `enum` rather than `#define`. GDB knows about enumeration constants.

You might want to make sure that none of the file names would conflict if the files were loaded onto an MS-DOS file system which shortens the names. You can use the program `doschk` to test for this.

Some GNU programs were designed to limit themselves to file names of 14 characters or less, to avoid file name conflicts if they are read into older System V systems. Please preserve this feature in the existing GNU programs that have it, but there is no need to do this in new GNU programs. `doschk` also reports file names longer than 14 characters.

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