

# Programming in JavaScript

## Section 1: JavaScript Basics

### 1.1 Introduction

The HTML `<script>` element tag defines an inline and external JavaScript. Traditionally, we can also refer to scripts other than JavaScript e.g. PHP. In HTML5 the `<script>` tag assumes the script to be JavaScript.

Below is an example code for an inline JavaScript code:

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
  <head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
    <title>Inline JavaScript Example</title>
  </head>
  <body>
    <script>
      windows.alert('Hello, World!');
    </script>
  </body>
</html>
```

**Note:** This code displays the string Hello, World! in the browser's alert window.

`console.log('Hello, World!');` on the other hand will print to the browser's JavaScript console within the developer tools.

While it is possible to write scripts this way, we would typically want to make the script file separate from the HTML. There are a number of advantages of having an external JavaScript file such as it can speed up performance if multiple pages refer to the script file because the browser can cache request to the same file, it avoids code duplication, easy to use tools such as linters if the file is separate and easy to edit/maintain/reuse the code.

To create a external JavaScript file we would typically create a external script js directory and store all of our JavaScript files in this directory. The JavaScript file will have an extension of .js for example script.js and this file can be loaded into our HTML file using the `<script src="">` tag pointing to the relative path from the .html file. Below is an example:

```
js > .js index.js
1 windows.alert('Hello, World!');
```

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
  <head>
    <meta charset="UTF-8">
    <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
    <title>External JavaScript Example</title>
  </head>
  <body>
    <script src="./js/index.js"></script>
  </body>
</html>
```

**Disclaimer:** The `<script>` tag can be places in either the `<head>` or `<body>` element tags but for performance reasons when loading synchronous scripts it is often encouraged to place the script tag at the bottom of the `<body>` element. That way the page content loads and is parsed before waiting for the script to download and execute.

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="UTF-8">
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
  <title>External JavaScript Example</title>
  <script src="../js/index.js" async</script>
</head>
<body>
  ...
</body>
</html>
```

If the script tag is placed in the <header> element we can add the async attribute which will allow the ability to load external scripts asynchronously while the page content downloads.

To download the script while the page content is downloading and execute the script after the HTML has parsed we can use the defer attribute. This will behave and be treated as if the script was added to the bottom of the <body> element tags.

```
<!DOCTYPE html>
<html lang="en">
<head>
  <meta charset="UTF-8">
  <meta name="viewport" content="width=device-width, initial-scale=1.0">
  <title>External JavaScript Example</title>
  <script src="../js/index.js" defer</script>
</head>
<body>
  ...
</body>
</html>
```

**Disclaimer:** Assuming the web server supports loading scripts in parallel we would potentially get a slight performance boost but it is recommended to stick to the <script> tag for external JavaScript files to be placed at the bottom of the <body> element tag.

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## 1.2 Primitive Variables

A Variable is a reference in memory that defines a particular value. Variables can reference other variables and their values and the variable values can be changed if declared as mutable properties i.e. var and let.

There are different ways to declare variables. Variables names must start with a letter and contain no spaces (some special characters such as the underscore ( \_ ) is allowed). Variables can contain numbers so long as it is not the first character in the name.

To assign a value to a variable we use the equal ( = ) sign. This will assign the value on the right of the equal sign to the variable name on the left of the equal sign.

We can use variables as placeholders for values, functions, equations and more. Variables can be set to reference another variable or the result of another variable.

```
var myVariable;

var myVariable2 = 20;
console.log(myVariable2); // Prints 20 in the console

var myOtherVariable = myVariable2 + 10;

1 var myVariable;
2 myVariable = 20;
3 console.log(myVariable); // Prints 20 in the console
4 myVariable = 10;
5 console.log(myVariable); // Prints 10 in the console
```

**Important:** There is a difference between declaring and defining a variable. In the second example above, line 1 declares a variable telling the interpreter a variable exists. The second line defines the value of the variable i.e. to be 20. The value of the variable can be changed at any time by defining a new value.

JavaScript ES5 defines five primitive data types and one special type: Number, String, Boolean, Null, Undefined and Object.

Functions are considered an Object data type and have the ability to be called. ES6 also adds another data type called Symbols.

```
var a = 1;
var b = 2;
console.log(a + b); // Prints 3 in the console

var a = 'String A';
var b = 'String B';
console.log(a + b); // Prints StringAStringB in the console

var a = '1';
var b = '2';
console.log(a + b); // Prints 12 in the console
```

A number in JavaScript is a number regardless if it is an integer, long, float or double compared to other programming languages.

Strings are a sequence of characters strung together and is used to represent textual data.

We can use the loose equality operator ( `==` ) to compare two variables. We can also use other operators on variables which acts differently depending on the variable type. For example the addition ( `+` ) operator on number variables will add the two variables while using it on a string data type will concatenate the data into a concatenated string.

JavaScript is a loosely typed language which means that variables can be set to any data type without what type it needs to be first and it is allowed to change to a different type at any moment.

A boolean is a data type with two possible values i.e. true or false. When adding two booleans together the boolean is cast into the number 1 for true and 0 for false. In JavaScript type casting is the action of turning the types of one variable into another.

**Disclaimer:** Resolving different data types and type casting in JavaScript is very complex and a very common source of problems which is why the superset languages like TypeScript exists.

The strict equality operator ( `===` ) checks the equality not only in the value of the variable but also the data type itself. Therefore a number 1 is not the same as a string of '1' because the data types are different.

Therefore, the loose equality operator will tell JavaScript to try to resolve the variable types before checking if they are equal to one another while the strict equality operator checks if the data types are the same and only then to perform the equality check.

```
var a = 12;
var b = '12';
console.log(a == b); // Prints True in the console
console.log(a === b); // Prints False in the console
```

**Note:** There are two ways to add comments in JavaScript. The first is the single line comment which is added by using two forward slashes ( `//` ) to a line of code and everything after the forward slashes are commented. The second is to use the forward slash and the start symbols ( `/* */` ) and anything inside of this is commented out.

Null is the intentional absence of a value i.e. it means that a variable points to nothing. When a variable is implicitly absent of a value this makes the variable a data type of undefined. Therefore, if a variable has not been explicitly assigned a value it is considered

undefined. The most common place to see undefined variables are properties and objects that do not exist.

**Disclaimer:** While it is possible to declare a variable the value of undefined it is not recommended because the purpose of a undefined variable is to signify that the value has not been intentionally assigned anything. Explicitly assigning a variable to undefined goes against the spirit of this concept.