

MEMORANDUM

To: Seniors preparing for a career in Software Engineering

From: John Vincent

Subject: Communication through commentation

Date: Tuesday, August 29, 2017

When working in a team it is critically important for engineers to write code that other people the team can easily understand and use. The most effective way to make sure that others can use code you create, regardless of its complexity, is to properly comment it. When it comes to comments uniformity can allow for users to more quickly find the information they are looking for. Now that the importance of using documentation is clear, its important to understand how to do the documentation properly.

The proper comment style to use can depend on a few things. First many large companies, like google, will issue a style guide(see link 1). These documents specify how everything should be formatted, and can include sections on how the company wants their code commented. Using the company style is always the best option because people in the company will be accustomed to reading this type of comment and will allow co workers to more quickly read, and understand your code. If there is no defined style guide, many languages have a standard comment style defined by its community.

The information a user needs in order to make use of some code largely depends on the language being used. So when trying to find a style to use it's always useful to look at the community behind the language. For example most java programmers use a style of comment called javadoc(see link 2) because it more clearly identifies the important aspects of the code that another user must interact with. People in the Perl community on the other hand would rather use POD(see link 3) commenting because it caters to perls more loose nature. An added benefit of using these language specific documentation styles is that many of them have tools that will generate a set of static webpages for the project, allowing users to have a clean, abstracted interface to reference when using the code. An example of a website generated using javadoc would be Apache's dbcp(see link 4) which is an all generated by the javadoc program.

Links

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| 1 | google style guide | google.github.io/styleguide/cppguide.html#Comments |
| 2 | javadoc | www.tutorialspoint.com/java/java_documentation.htm |
| 3 | POD | perldoc.perl.org/perlpod.html#Command-Paragraph |
| 4 | dbcp doc | commons.apache.org/proper/commons-dbcp/api-1.2.2/index.html |