Å Official Documentation

The official specification for Å

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Abstract

This document is the official document for the Å programming language. It shows how a program is parsed from source code into a binary format and then how the binary is executed. Thus this document will also contain the semantics of the language and an explanation for the default implementation of the language. Besides explaining the semantics and syntax, this document will also explain how the source code is parsed. Additionally, how this parse result is operated on to convert it into a valid piece of Å code.

Anything written or discussed within this document is only safely assumed to be applicable for Å version 1.0. Therefore, code and other semantics may be outdated or even too new (or features not implemented yet). This document should, therefore, only act as documentation or as guidance for the previously specified version of Å.

Using the Virtual Machine

The virtual machine is first and foremost a command-line tool. It can - on Windows 10 - be run as an executable, wherein it will expect some arguments be given to it. The arguments given to the application will then be used to determine what the application will actually do.

The machine is capable of compiling source code into Å byte code. This byte code can then be executed by the machine directly after compilation (Such that it acts as an interpreter of the source code) or be executed later. Besides compiling and executing Å code, the machine is also capable of generating a readable text version of the generated byte code. Letting the user read the result of the compilation. To add to this, the compiler can also unparse the given Abstract Syntax tree that was created during the parsing of the source code. This can help in giving the programmer a bigger insight into the interpretation of the code.

Most arguments given to the machine can be executed in sequence (order of arguments is ignored). To which the use of the machine is simplified to simply giving it commands.

Argument	Description	Mode	Version
`-ga`	Generate formatted bytecode from compilation	R|D	1.0
`-lc`	Log the compile time in seconds	R|D	1.0
`-le`	Log the execute time in seconds	R|D	1.0
`-silent`	Ignores program output	R|D	1.0
`-pause`	Will need user input to close	R|D	1.0
`-trace`	Trace virtual machine operations	D	1.0
`-test_regressive`	Run regression tests	D	1.0
`-test_projects`	Run project regression tests	D	1.0
`-unparse`	Unparse source after parsing	R|D	1.0
`-verify`	Verify program before running it	R|D	1.0
`-c "input file"`	Compile the input file	R|D	1.0
`-r "input file"`	Run the input file (Must be a binary)	R|D	1.0
`-o "output file"`	Output operation to file	R|D	1.0
`-oae "output file"`	Output operation to specified file and execute it	R|D	1.0

Some command arguments (Marked with a 'D') may only work if the VM (The `C++` code) was compiled with the `_DEBUG` flag enabled. These operations may severely hinder the performance of the language and the VM and have, therefore, been disabled for public builds. In the case of `-test_regressive`, it cannot be guaranteed the end user has the files for running the regression tests. Thus to ensure no error reports of this, or unfortunate crashes, this feature is only available for the developers of Å.

As an example, if we wanted to compile and execute a file named "test.aa", with the code:

```
1  class Program {
2    Program() {
3      println("Hello World from class");
4    }
5  };
6
7  int main() {
8    Program p = new Program();
9    0;
10 };
11
12 main();
```

It could be done with the command arguments:

```
call AAVM.exe -ga -unparse -c "test.aa" -oae "test.aab" -le -lc -pause
```

Which would give a formatted binary file ("test.aab") and an unparsed file alongside the generated binary. Additionally, we'd see the printed message in the console window, as well as the number 0.

Parsing

The parsing of Å source code is split into several different stages. The first stage is the lexical analysis. Here each character of the source code is examined and, in the given context, tokenised such that the parse tree has some workable data. The parse tree is constructed by first converting the tokens into parse nodes. This constructs a flattened tree (a simple vector), that, using the syntax rules of the language are expanded. Then the more detailed parsing takes places. Lastly, the whole parse tree is converted into an abstract syntax tree (AST). Afterwards, the parsing result (the AST) is handed off to the compiler.

The first parsing error - syntax error - recorded will stop the parsing of the code and immediately report the syntax error to the console. A short explanation of what failed (for example what was expected and what was found) is reported alongside a position (line and column) in code. If possible, a specific syntax error code is also given, hopefully, making it easier to correct or lookup solutions.

Lexical Analysis

The lexical process is rather simple and is using a two-pass system. In the first pass, most if not all words and special characters are tokenized. Each found token saves the result in a data structure containing the associated text and the position in code. The token types are shown in the table below[1]:

#	Token	Description	Regular Expression
0	invalid	Invalid Token	
1	whitespace	Whitespace character	$\epsilon\|\Lambda$
2	identifier	Identifier - name or word	$(\_\|[a-Z])^+([0-9]\|[a-Z]\|\_)^*$
3	keyword	Word with specific meaning	$identifier \in$ keywordlist
4	separator	Separating character	$;\|,\|()\|\{\|\}\|[\|]$
5	OP	Operator character	$+\|-\|*\|/\|\%\|=\|!\|?\|<\|>\|\&\|\|\|\$\|\#\|^$
6	intlit	Integer Literal	$[1-9]^+[0-9]^*$
7	floatlit	Floating point literal (32-bit)	$[0-9]^+.[0-9]^+f$
8	doublelit	Double literal (64-bit floating point)	$[0-9]^+.[0-9]^+$
9	charlit	Character literal	$'([0-9]\|a-Z]\|\_\|\epsilon)'$
10	stringlit	String literal	$"([0-9]\|a-Z]\|\_\|\epsilon)^*"$
11	stringOP	String operator	
12	comment	Comment token	$//([0-9]\|[a-Z]\|\_\|\epsilon\|\Lambda)^*$\n
13	accessor	Access token	$.\|:$
14	quote	Quotation token	$'\|"$

Some of these tokens may depend on their context (For example, the keyword-identifier relation). The given regular expressions can only be used to tokenise a piece of Å source code. It should not be taken as a complete set of regular expressions defining the language.

After the initial lexical run, the second pass starts. Here tokens that can be merged are merged. For instance, two operator tokens making up a valid operator if merged. A full list of these operators can be found in appendix 6. In this pass, string literals and char literals are also found, taking all the contents between two quote tokens and putting them into a string or char literal, depending on the length of the contents. This is part of why whitespace is tokenised, as that's how string literals keep track of the whitespace characters.

All registered identifiers are matched against the keywordlist. If a match is found with any word from the above, the identifier token is "upgraded" to be a keyword token. Some keywords may be contextualised, meaning their given meaning may only apply if in the correct context. This is not decided by the lexical analysis but either by the lexical to parse tree conversion or by the parse tree formalizer (third pass of the parse tree creation algorithm).

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[1]The ϵ character represents the whitespace character ' ' and Λ represents the empty word - no character.

Parse tree (PT)

Creating the parse tree is done using a three pass process, where the lexical analysis is converted into a proper parse tree with all the important data preserved. Meaning no data is lost during this translation from a flat array into a tree structure. Additionally, the tree nodes may contain tags, where some data may be saved for later use in the compilation process.

The root of the parse tree will always be of the type Compile Unit. Which is how a program will be able to have more than one top level node (as all top level nodes are added as children to the compile unit before returning the result of the operation. This node type is also what makes it possible to compile projects including more than one file.

First Pass

The first pass takes the result of the lexical analysis as input. It then converts the result into an array (std::vector) with a tree node representation of the result. This will create a flattened tree - no parents or children set. It's also here the parser determines if a token of type OP is a binary or a unary operation.

The lexical token type OP is by default designated as a pre-unary operator, unless any literal type, end parenthesis, end index (]), or an identifier token is preceding it. Then it will be treated as a binary operator. If such is not the case, the operator is then treated as a pre-unary operator. Only if an identifier follows an operator (++ and --) and the previous does not hold will it be defined as a post-unary operator. The partial BNF grammar for parsing this syntax would be:

Expr	::=	*Expr*
	|	(*Expr*)
	|	*Expr BinaryOp Expr*
	|	*PreUnaryOp Expr*
	|	*IncDecOp Id*
	|	*Id IncDecOp*
	|	See full definition in Appendix 1
BinaryOp	::=	+ | - | * | / | % | < | > | <= | >= | == | != | += | -= | /= | *= | %=
	|	|| | && | | | & | << | >> | =>
PreUnaryOp	::=	- | ! | #
IncDecOp	::=	++ | --
Id	::=	See full definition in Appendix 1

From the above it's not fully clear, however, post-unary operators have higher precedence than pre-unary operators. Additionally, the unary operators also have higher precedence than binary operators. Thus, the following will not be valid code:

```
1  {
2     int  x = 5;
3     int  y = 5;
4     x--y;
5  }
```

The above code will be rejected by the parser in the very first pass. The compiler will cite *"'--' cannot be used as a binary operator"* as the reason it will not compile the above. Additionally, it should be made clear that increment and decrement operators may only operate on variables, given their specific behaviour.

Second Pass

Following this token operation, the tree is unflattened. Meaning several of the syntax rules are now applied. More specifically, arithmetic, unary, assignment, groupings, and other types of bindings are applied. Meaning we here start forming the actual parse tree, such that the third pass can begin converting parts of the tree into specific node types. Which in turn will make it easier to translate into an abstract syntax tree and from there run more advanced analyses of the input - to determine the correctness of the program. No syntax errors are detected in the second pass - meaning the potential syntax errors are left to the third and final pass.

By default this pass will attempt to find certain keywords, operators, or other patterns and create sub-expressions from this - where these sub expressions are added as children to the tree node that triggered the operation. Note, this is not where binary and unary operations (and the like) are formed. This pass is however, the pass where it's determined if something is a parameter list (for a function call or function declaration) or if it's an enclosed expression.

The second pass follows a strict hierarchy when applying precedence rules. Which can be seen in the table below:

Priority	Symbols	Description and Examples
1	{, }	Code blocks - for sequences of connected statements
2	(,)	Expressions, code captured between a set of parentheses: `(x)`, `(-x)`, `(x,y)`.
3	[,]	Indexing - or subscripting - on some identifier: `x[]`, `x[y]`
4	::, .	Left-to-right associative member access (`x.y`, `x::y`)
5	!, #, -, --, ++	Examples: `!x`, `#x`, `-x`, `--x`, `++x`, `x--`, `x++`
6	*, /, %	Multiplication, division and modulo operations. `x*y`, `x/y`, `x% y` Specifically, `x+y*z` $\Rightarrow$ `x+(y*z)`.
7	=, /=, *=, +=, -=	Ensures assignment operations will always be set as root of a subtree representing a binary operation. Meaning: `x=y*z` $\Rightarrow$ `((x)=(y*z))`
8	match	Ensure keywords are prioritised correctly.

Any node types that are not caught in this pass are either part of the sub expression being moved below a node in the tree structure or is a top-level node.

Third Pass

In the third pass, the remaining part of the parsing is done, thus finalising the creation of the parse tree. In this pass binary operations, function calls, declarations and other language features are parsed and it's here where most of the syntax errors will be detected.

Abstract Syntax Tree (AST)

...

Expanding the AST

...

Simplifying the AST

...

Static Analysis

Type declarations

...

Function Matching

...

Building Inheritance Trees

...

Control path verification

...

Type System

...

Static Type Environment

...

Dynamic Type Environment

...

Typechecking

...

Evaluation of Code

Arithmetic Operators

Functional Operators

Declarative Operators

Internals of the Virtual Machine

...

Executing bytecode

...

The operand and call stacks

...

The Ref Value Environment

...

The Garbage Collector

Compiler

...
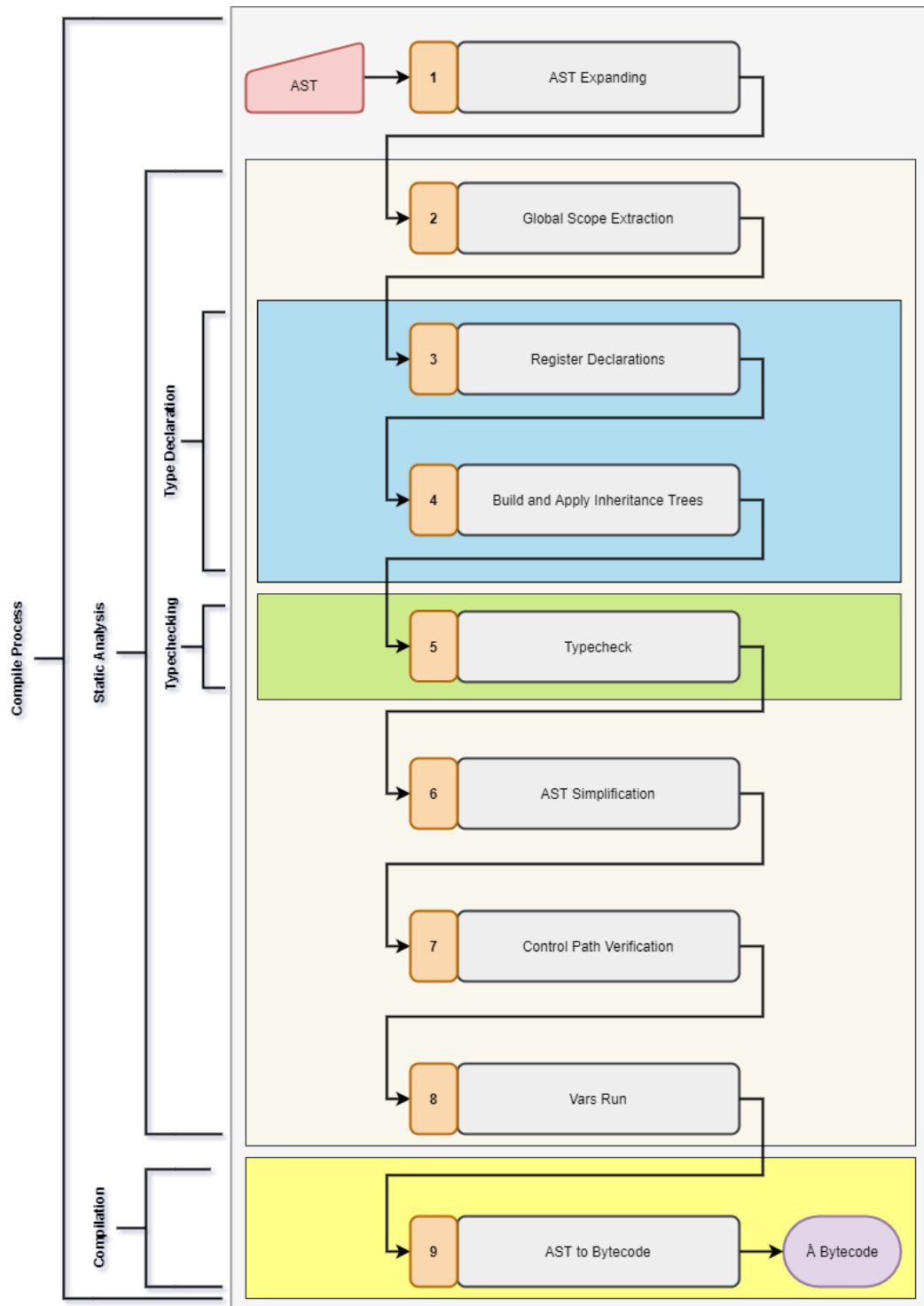
Compiling the AST

...

AST to Bytecode Flowchart

Figure 1: The flowchart of the compile process

Probably some descriptive text

Verifying Å Bytecode

...

Structure of an Å-binary file

Appendix

The following pages are the appendices of this specification and contain full overview over the grammar, semantics, type rules, compile errors, runtime errors, and instruction list.

Appendix 1: Complete Overview of Grammar

The following is a BNF grammar - extended with '*' (Kleene Star)[2] and '+' (Kleene Plus). The ϵ character symbolises whitespace.

Statement	::=	*Expr* ;
	|	*Id* = *Expr* ;
Expr	:=	(*Expr*)
	|	*Expr BinaryOp Expr*
	|	*PreUnaryOp Expr*
	|	*IncDecOp Id*
	|	*Id IncDecOp*
	|	*IntLit*
	|	*FloatLit*
	|	*DoubleLit*
	|	*BoolLit*
	|	*NullLit*
	|	*StringLit*
	|	*CharLit*
	|	*Id*
Decl	::=	var *Id* = *Expr* ;
	|	const var *Id* = *Expr* ;
	|	*TypeId Id* = *Expr* ;
	|	class *Id* { *Decl** }
	|	class *Id*() { *Decl** }
	|	class *Id*(*Param*) { *Decl** }
	|	*TypeID Id*() { *Statement** }
	|	void *Id*() { *Statement** }
	|	*TypeID Id*(*Param*) { *Statement** }
	|	void *Id*(*Param*) { *Statement** }
Param	::=	*TypeID Id* | *Param* , *Param*
BinaryOp	::=	+ | - | * | / | % | < | > | <= | >= | == | != | += | -= | /= | *= | %=
	|	|| | && | | | & | << | >> | =>
PreUnaryOp	::=	- | ! | #
IncDecOp	::=	++ | --
Digit	::=	0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9
IntLit	::=	*Digit*$^+$
FloatLit	::=	*Digit*$^+$.*Digit*$^+$f
DoubleLit	::=	*Digit*$^+$.*Digit*$^+$

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[2]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kleene_star

BoolLit	::=	`true` | `false`
NullLit	::=	`null`
Letter	::=	A | B | C | D | E | F | G | H | I | J | K | L | M | N
		| O | P | Q | R | S | T | U | V | W | X | Y | Z | Å
		| a | b | c | d | e | f | g | h | i | j | k | l | m | n
		| o | p | q | r | s | t | u | v | w | x | y | z | å
Id	::=	$Letter^+ Digit^* Letter^*$ | $\_Id$
Character	::=	$Letter$ | $Digit$ | ϵ | _ | + | - | * | / | % | # | < | > | = | | | & | \$ | € | @ | £ | !
		| ? | : | ; | , | . | ^ | ¨ | ~ | (|) | { | } | [|] | § | `\n` | `\t`
StringLit	::=	$¨Character^* ¨$
CharLit	::=	$'Character'$
TypeID	::=	`string` | `bool` | `int` | `float` | `char` | `Any` | Id

Appendix 2: Complete Overview of Operational Semantics

Environment list

Symbol	Description
ρ	The variable environment
ϕ	The first-order function environment
κ	The class environment
σ	The heap environment

$$\text{RULE}$$
$$\frac{top}{bottom}$$

Appendix 3: Complete Overview of Typing Rules

<div align="center">

Environment list

Symbol	Description
θ	The primitive type environment
ψ	The first-order function type environment
γ	The class type environment

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<div align="center">

RULE

$$\frac{top}{bottom}$$

</div>

Appendix 4: Complete Overview of Compile Errors

Appendix 5: Complete Overview of Instruction List

A complete and fully up to date list can be found underline.

#	Opcode	Arguments	Stack before	Stack after	Description	Notes	Version
0	NOP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
1	PUSHC		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
2	PUSHN		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
3	PUSHV		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
4	PUSHWS		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
5	ADD		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
6	SUB		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
7	MUL		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
8	DIV		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
9	MOD		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
10	NNEG		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
11	CONCAT		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
12	LEN		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
13	INC		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
14	DEC		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
15	SETVAR		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
16	GETVAR		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
17	SETFIELD		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
18	GETFIELD		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
19	GETELEM		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
20	SETELEM		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
21	JMP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
22	JMPF		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
23	JMPT		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
24	LJMP		TBD	TBD	No operation	Not used	V1.0
25	CALL		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
26	VCALL		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
27	XCALL		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
28	RET		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
29	CMPE		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
30	CMPNE		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
31	LE		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
32	GE		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
33	GEQ		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
34	LEQ		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
35	LNEG		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
36	LAND		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
37	LOR		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
38	BAND		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
39	BOR		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
40	TUPLECMP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
41	TUPLENEW		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
42	TUPLEGET		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
43	ALLOC		TBD	TBD	No operation	Not used	V1.0
44	ALLOCARRAY		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
45	CTOR		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
46	TRY		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
47	THROW		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
48	BRK		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
49	POP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
50	CASTI2F		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
51	CASTF2I		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0

52	CASTF2I		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
53	CASTS2F		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
54	CASTF2S		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
55	CASTL2F		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
56	CASTL2I		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
57	CASTL2S		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
58	CASTF2L		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
59	CASTI2D		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
60	CASTS2D		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
61	CASTF2D		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
62	CASTL2D		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
63	CASTD2I		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
64	CASTD2S		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
65	CASTD2F		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
66	CASTD2L		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
67	WRAP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
68	UNWRAP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
69	BCKM		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
70	BDOP		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0
71	EXTTAG		TBD	TBD	No operation		V1.0

Appendix 6: Complete operator list

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Appendix 7: Complete keyword list

Keyword	Contextual	Description
var		Declares a variable - the type is decided statically by the type-checker.
true		Boolean value of true (1)
false		Boolean value of false (0)
null		Pointer to non-existing object
void		Function returns no value
Any		Variable or argument may be of any type
if		If-statement
else		
for		
foreach		
while		
do		
match		Pattern matching initializer
case		A case initialiser for a pattern in a pattern match
break		
return		
continue		
yield	X	
when	X	
as	X	
is	X	
class		
new		
this		
base		
enum		
try		
catch		
throw		
using		
from	X	
namespace		
public		
private		
protected		
static		
abstract		
interface		
tagged	X	
sealed		
external		
internal		
virtual		
override		
operator	X	