



# Stopify

*version 0.1.0*

## **User's Manual**

*by*

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# Chapter 1

## Acknowledgements

Stopify draws inspiration from several existing systems, including `debug.js`, `Doppio`, `Gambit.js`, `Pyret`, `scheme2js`, `Unwinder`, and `WeScheme`. We thank Emery Berger, Benjamin Lerner, Robert Powers, and John Vilks for insightful discussions. We thank Caitlin Santone for designing the Stopify logo.



# Chapter 2

## Introduction

Stopify is a JavaScript-to-JavaScript compiler that makes JavaScript a better target language for high-level languages and web-based programming tools. Stopify enhances JavaScript with debugging abstractions, blocking operations, and support for long-running computations.

Suppose you have a compiler  $C$  from language  $L$  to JavaScript. You can apply Stopify to the output of  $C$  and leave  $C$  almost entirely unchanged. Stopify will provide the following features:

1. Stopify will support long-running  $L$  programs without freezing the browser tab. In particular, programs can access the DOM and are not limited to Web Workers.
2. Stopify can pause or terminate an  $L$  program, even if it is an infinite loop.
3. Stopify can set breakpoints or single-step through the  $L$  program, if  $C$  generates source maps.
4. Stopify can simulate an arbitrarily deep stack and proper tail calls. This feature is necessary to run certain functional programs in the browser.
5. Stopify can simulate blocking operations on the web.

In many cases, it is possible to “blindly” use Stopify by applying it to the output of your compiler. However, Stopify will compile faster, produce faster code, and support more features, if your compiler cooperates with Stopify in particular ways. This manual will guide you through using Stopify with your own compiler.

**Warning** This manual is a work in progress. Many Stopify features remain undocumented. We will preserve the interfaces documented here in subsequent releases of Stopify.

### 2.1 Quick Start

This section guides you through installing Stopify and applying it to a simple JavaScript program that runs forever and periodically prints the current time (fig. 2.1). However, since the program never yields control to the browser’s event loop (e.g., using `setTimeout`), nothing will appear on the page and the browser tab will eventually crash. Stopify will make this program behave more naturally and actually show output.

1. Install the Stopify executable using NPM (or Yarn):

```
npm install -g stopify
```

```

const elt = document.createElement("div");
document.body.appendChild(elt);

var i = 0;
var j = 0;
while(true) {
  if (i++ == 10000000) {
    j++;
    elt.innerText = "Still running ... " + (new Date());
    i = 0;
  }
}

```

Figure 2.1: This program will make any web browser crash.

```

<html>
<body>
  <script src="stopify.bundle.js"></script>
  <script>
    var runner = stopify.stopify("output.js");
    runner.run(() => console.log("done"));
  </script>
</body>
</html>

```

Figure 2.2: A basic driver to run a stopified program.

2. Save the program in fig. 2.1 to the file `input.js`:

3. Use the Stopify compiler to stopify the program:

```
stopify input.js output.js
```

4. The Stopify installation includes a copy of the Stopify runtime system (`stopify.bundle.js`)  
Look up the path using the following command:

```
stopify-path stopify.bundle.js
```

5. Create a simple web page that first loads the Stopify runtime system (i.e., the path produced in the previous step) and then uses the runtime system to load the saved file:

```

var runner = stopify.stopify("output.js");
runner.run(() => console.log("done"));

```

Figure 2.2 shows such a page.

Finally, open the page in any browser. You'll find that the the program "just works" and periodically prints the current time. In contrast, if you load `input.js` directly, it will not print anything and will eventually crash the browser tab.



# Chapter 3

## Overview

The Stopify package includes several components:

- A command-line compiler (the `stopify` executable).
- A compiler that can be used as a library from Node.
- A runtime system that is bundled for use in the browser. You can get the local path of this bundle using the following command:

```
stopify-path stopify.bundle.js
```

- A compiler and runtime system that are bundled for the browser. You can get the local path of this bundle using the following command:

```
stopify-path stopify-full.bundle.js
```

This bundle has a lot more code than the runtime-only bundle. However, running Stopify in the browser is useful if your users have spotty Internet connections.

Note that Section 2.1 presented the command-line compiler with the runtime-only bundle. The rest of this manual presents other ways to use Stopify.

### 3.1 The Command-Line Compiler

The Stopify CLI compiler requires the name of the input file and the name of the output file. In addition, the compiler has several optional flags:

```
stopify [flags] input.js output.js
```

The optional flags are:

- `-t` or `--transform` selects the continuation implementation to use (section 3.5.1).
- `-n` or `--new` selects the encoding for constructors (section 3.5.2).
- `--eval` or `--no-eval` determine if JavaScript's *eval* is supported (see section 3.5.3).
- `--es` determines if JavaScript's implicit operations supported (section 3.5.4).
- `--hofs` determines if JavaScript's builtin higher-order functions supported (section 3.5.6).
- `--js-args` determines how faithfully should Stopify support the *arguments* object (section 3.5.5).

- `--getters` or `--no-getters` determine if should Stopify support getters and setters (section 3.5.7).
- `--debug`: should Stopify support single-step debugging (section 3.5.8).

If a flag is not set, Stopify picks a default value that is documented in the subsection for each flag. By default, Stopify is *not* completely faithful to the semantics of JavaScript. (Certain JavaScript features are difficult to support and incur a high runtime cost.) Instead, Stopify's default values work with a number of compilers that we've tested. By default, Stopify does not support getters, setters, `eval`, builtin higher-order functions, implicit operations, `arguments`-object aliasing, and single-stepping. If you think you may need these features, you will need to set their corresponding flags.

To load a compiled file in the browser, the Stopify runtime provides the following function:

```
stopify.stopify(url: string, opts?: RuntimeOpts): AsyncRun
```

Above, `url` should be the address of the compiled file (i.e., hosted on your web server) and `url` is an optional runtime configuration (section 3.2). The result of this function is an `AsyncRun` object (section 3.3).

## 3.2 Runtime Configuration

The Stopify runtime system takes a dictionary of options with the following type:

```
interface RuntimeOpts {
  estimator?: "reservoir" | "exact" | "countdown",
  yieldInterval?: number /* must be greater than zero */
}
```

These options control how frequently Stopify yields control to the browser (`yieldInterval`) and the mechanism that it uses to determine elapsed time (`estimator`). By default, Stopify uses the `reservoir` estimator that samples the current time (using `Date.now()`) and tries to yield every 100 milliseconds. This mechanism is inexact, but performs well. You can adjust the yield interval, but we do not recommend using a value lower than 100.

The `countdown` estimator yields after exactly  $n$  yield points have passed. With this estimator, the `yieldInterval` is interpreted as the value of  $n$  and not a duration. We do not recommend using this estimator in practice, since a good value of  $n$  will depend on platform performance and program characteristics that are very hard to predict. However, it is useful for reproducing bugs in Stopify, since the `reservoir` estimator is nondeterministic.

Finally, the `exact` estimator checks the current time at every yield point, instead of sampling the time. This has a higher runtime overhead than `reservoir` and we do not recommend it.

## 3.3 The AsyncRun Interface

The `AsyncRun` interface (fig. 3.1) provides methods to run, stop, and control the execution of a stopified program. The interface provides several methods, none of which should be used directly by the stopified program. The following methods are meant to be used by the driver program that controls execution (e.g., a web-based IDE):

- The `run` method starts execution and requires a callback that gets invoked when execution completes. You may provide optional callbacks that are invoked when the program yields control and when a breakpoint is reached.
- The `setBreakpoint` method sets the active breakpoints.
- The `pause` method pauses the program at the next yield point and requires an optional callback that is invoked when the program has paused.

```

interface AsyncRun {
  run(onDone: () => void, onYield?: () => void, onBreakpoint?: (line: number) => void): void;
  pause(onPaused: (line?: number) => void): void;
  resume(): void;
  setBreakpoints(line: number[]): void;
  step(onStep: (line: number) => void): void;
  pauseImmediate(callback: () => void): void;
  continueImmediate(result: any): void;
}

```

Figure 3.1: The AsyncRun interface.

- The `resume` method resumes execution after a pause.
- The `step` method resumes execution and pauses again at the next yield point.

The following methods are meant to be used by non-blocking JavaScript functions to provide simulated blocking interface to the stopified program:

- The `pauseImmediate` method suspends the stopified program and invokes the provided callback. A function should not execute anything after invoking `pauseImmediate`. Typically, a function that uses `pauseImmediate` will use it in a `return` statement.
- The `continueImmediate` function resumes execution with the provided value.

Chapter 4 has several examples that use these methods to implement simulated blocking operations.

## 3.4 The Online Compiler

The file `stopify-full.bundle.js` packages the compiler and runtime system for use the browser. You can get the local path of this bundle using the following command:

```
stopify-path stopify-full.bundle.js
```

This bundle exposes the following function:

```
stopify.stopifyLocally(url: string, copts?: CompileOpts, ropts?: RuntimeOpts): AsyncRun
```

The optional `CompilerOpts` is dictionary with the following type:

```

interface CompilerOpts {
  getters?: boolean,
  debug?: boolean,
  captureMethod?: "lazy" | "retval" | "eager",
  newMethod?: "wrapper" | "direct",
  eval?: boolean,
  es?: "sane" | "es5",
  hofs: "builtin" | "fill",
  jsArgs?: "simple" | "faithful" | "full",
  externals?: string[]
}

```

## 3.5 Compiler Configuration

You can configure the Stopify compiler in several ways. Some of these options only affect performance, whereas other options affect the sub-language of JavaScript that the compiler targets.

### 3.5.1 Transformation (`.captureMethod`)

Stopify uses first-class continuations as a primitive to implement its execution control features. Stopify can represent continuations in several ways; the fastest approach depends on the application and the browser. The valid options are "lazy", "retval", and "eager". For most cases, we recommend using "lazy"

### 3.5.2 Constructor Encoding (`.newMethod`)

Stopify implements two mechanisms to support suspending execution within the dynamic extent of a constructor call.

- "wrapper" desugars all `new` expressions to ordinary function calls, using `Object.create`.
- "direct" preserves `new` expressions, but instruments all functions to check if they are invoked as constructors, using `new.target`.

The fastest approach depends on the browser. We recommend using `wrapper`.

### 3.5.3 Eval Support (`.eval`)

How should Stopify handle JavaScript's `eval` function? By default, this flag is `false` and Stopify leaves `eval` unchanged. Since Stopify typically does not rename variables, using a stopfied program can use `eval`, but the evaluated code may lock-up the browser if it has an infinite loop.

If set to `true`, Stopify rewrites calls to JavaScript's `eval` function to invoke the Stopify compiler. (Note: Stopify does *not* rewrite `new Function` and dynamically generated `<script>` tags.) This allows Stopify to control execution in dynamically generated code. Naturally, this requires the online compiler. However, the feature incurs considerable overhead.

### 3.5.4 Implicit Operations (`.es`)

Stopify can suspend execution within user-written `valueOf()` and `toString()` methods that JavaScript invokes implicitly.

For example, the following program is an infinite loop in JavaScript:

```
var x = { toString: function() { while(true) { } } };
x + 1;
```

With the implicit operations flag is set to "es5", Stopify will be able to gracefully suspend the program above. With the flag set to "sane", Stopify will not be able to detect the the infinite loop. We have found that most source language compilers do not rely on implicit operations, thus it is usually safe to use "sane".

### 3.5.5 Fidelity of arguments (`.jsArgs`)

The `arguments` object makes it difficult for Stopify to resume execution after suspension. Stopify supports `arguments` in full, but it also supports two simple special cases that improve performance.

- Use "simple" if the program (1) does not use `arguments` to access declared formal arguments and (2) only reads additional arguments using the `arguments` object.
- Use "faithful" if the program (1) does not use `arguments` to access declared formal arguments and (2) may read or write additional arguments using the `arguments` object.
- Use "full" for full support of JavaScript's `arguments` object.

### 3.5.6 Higher Order Functions (`.hofs`)

Programs cannot use builtin higher-order functions (e.g., `.map`, `.filter`, etc.) with Stopify, since Stopify cannot instrument native code. The `.hofs` flag has two possible values:

- Use `"builtin"` if the program does not use any native higher-order functions.
- Use `"fill"` to have Stopify rewrite programs that use native higher-order functions to use polyfills written in JavaScript.

### 3.5.7 Getters and Setters (`.getters`)

Programs that suspend execution within getters/setters incur a lot of overhead with Stopify. The `.getters` flag has two possible values:

- Use `true` to have Stopify instrument the program to support suspension within getters and setters.
- Use `false` if the program does not use getters and setters.

### 3.5.8 Single-stepping and Breakpointing (`.debug`)

Set `.debug` to `true` to enable support for single-stepping and breakpointing. However, note that this requires more instrumentation and slows the program down further.



# Chapter 4

## Illustrative Examples

This chapter presents several examples that showcase Stopify's features.

### 4.1 A Blocking sleep function

The browser does not have a blocking `sleep` function. However, we can use `window.setTimeout` and Stopify to simulate a blocking `sleep` operation:

```
function sleep(duration) {  
  asyncRun.pauseImmediate(() => {  
    window.setTimeout(() => asyncRun.continueImmediate(undefined), duration);  
  });  
}
```

In the code above, `asyncRun` is an instance of `AsyncRun` (section 3.3). Note that this function should be stopified itself and needs to be declared as an external. Figure 4.1 shows a complete example of a page that uses `sleep`.

### 4.2 A Blocking prompt function

The `prompt` and `alert` functions that are built-in to browsers are not the ideal way to receive input from the user. First, modal dialog boxes are unattractive; second, a user can dismiss them; and finally, if a page displays too many modal dialog boxes, the browser can give the user to suppress all of them (fig. 4.2).

```

<html>
<body>
  <script src="../../stopify/dist/stopify-full.bundle.js"></script>
  <script>
    function sleep(duration) {
      asyncRun.pauseImmediate(() => {
        window.setTimeout(() => asyncRun.continueImmediate(undefined), duration);
      });
    }

    const program = `
      while(true) {
        sleep(1000);
        document.body.appendChild(document.createTextNode("."));
      }
    `;

    const asyncRun = stopify.stopifyLocally(
      `(function(){ ${program} })()`,
      { externals: [ "sleep", "document" ] });

    asyncRun.run(() => { });
  </script>
</body>
</html>

```

Figure 4.1: This program runs forever and prints a period each second.



```

<html>
<body>
  <div id="webConsole"></div>
  <script src="../../stopify/dist/stopify-full.bundle.js"></script>
  <script>
    const webConsole = document.getElementById('webConsole');

    function alert(message) {
      const div = document.createElement('div');
      div.appendChild(document.createTextNode(message));
      webConsole.appendChild(div);
    }

    function prompt() {
      return runner.pauseImmediate(() => {
        const div = document.createElement('div');
        div.appendChild(document.createTextNode('> '));
        const input = document.createElement('input');
        div.appendChild(input);
        // When ENTER pressed, replace the <input> with plain text
        input.addEventListener('keypress', (event) => {
          if (event.keyCode === 13) {
            const value = input.value;
            div.appendChild(document.createTextNode(value));
            div.removeChild(input);
            runner.continueImmediate(value);
          }
        });
        webConsole.appendChild(div);
        input.focus();
      });
    }

    const program = `
      alert("Enter the first number");
      var x = Number(prompt());
      alert("Enter the second number");
      var y = Number(prompt());
      alert("Result is " + (x + y));
    `;

    const runner = stopify.stopifyLocally(
      `(function(){ ${program} })()\`,
      { externals: [ 'prompt', 'alert', 'pormpt' ] });

    runner.run(() => console.log('program complete'));
  </script>
</body>
</html>

```

Figure 4.2: This program prompts the user for two inputs without modal dialog boxes.