

Advanced C++ Programming

Keyword Safari





Preliminaries

Overview & Goals

- **Goal:** We want to be fluent in advanced C++
 - This also includes reading code from any source, which might use somewhat obscure features
- There are a number of concepts which are important to understand in order to achieve this goal, but that we cannot dedicate an entire lecture to
 - Gathered in this lecture



Storage Class Specifiers

Background

- Objects (e.g. variables) in C++ feature ***storage*** and have a type of ***linkage***

Storage Duration	
Automatic storage duration Allocated at the beginning of a <i>block</i> , deallocated at the end; e.g. local variables	Thread storage duration Allocated when a <i>thread</i> begins, deallocated when it ends
Static storage duration Allocated at the start of the <i>program</i> , deallocated at the end; e.g. global variables	Dynamic storage duration Explicitly allocated and deallocated by the programmer using dynamic memory allocation functions

Background

- Objects (e.g. variables) in C++ feature ***storage*** and have a type of ***linkage***

Linkage	
No linkage Names with no linkage always generate a unique object instance. E.g. local variables	
Internal linkage If a name has internal linkage, it can be referred to within the current translation unit	External linkage Names with external linkage can be referred to from other translation units. E.g. normal (unqualified) functions


Storage Class Specifiers

- **static**
Forces *static* or *thread* storage duration and *internal* linkage
- **extern**
Forces *static* or *thread* storage duration and *external* linkage
- **thread_local**
Forces *thread* storage duration

05_01_storage_classes.cpp

Local Static Initialization

- Local “static” variables are initialized the first time control flow passes through their declaration
 - On subsequent passes, the initialization is skipped
 - Destructors are called at program exit
- This is demonstrated in 05_02_static_initialization.cpp
- **Note:** local statics introduce unexpected state
→ Carefully consider their usage!



CV Type Qualifiers

CV Qualifier Basics

- For any type `T` which is not a function or reference type, there are three more distinct types in the C++ type system:
 - `const T`
A `T` which cannot be modified.
 - `volatile T`
A `T` which might be modified externally (accesses are side-effects for the purpose of optimization).
 - `const volatile T`
A `T` which cannot be modified in this context, but might be changed externally.

CV Ordering and Implicit Conversion

Ordering
("less" = "less qualified")

unqualified < const

unqualified < volatile

unqualified < const volatile

const < const volatile

volatile < const volatile

Implicit conversion occurs to
more qualified CV types.

E.g.

unqualified → const

const → const volatile

05_03_cv_qualification.cpp



Additional Class Member Options

Overview

- We already discussed *virtual*, *override*, and *final*, as well as *const*
- The keyword “static” has a different meaning for class members
- Constructors can be designated “explicit”
- In addition to *const* qualifiers, member functions can be *lvalue* and *rvalue reference qualified*
- Class data members may be designated “mutable”

Static Class Members

- In class definitions, “static” declares *members not bound to any class instance*
- It can be applied to both data members and member functions
- Simple examples are shown in 05_04_static_members.cpp
- *For most practical purposes, static data members act like global variables, and static member functions act like freestanding functions*

Explicit Constructors

- Single-argument constructors are, by default, *implicitly used for conversion operations*
- This concept is demonstrated in 05_05_explicit_constructors.cpp
- The keyword “explicit” prevents this from occurring
- Guidelines
 1. By default, declare all single-argument constructors explicit, unless you really want implicit conversion to occur (e.g. building a “Complex” number from a double)
 2. Prefer named conversion functions over constructor conversion

Member Function Reference Qualifiers

- As we discussed previously, member functions may be “const” qualified
 - This affects the const-ness of the `this` object
- In the same fashion, they can be l- or r-value reference qualified
 - This affects the *value* categories for `this` that they bind to
- The example in `05_06_member_ref_qualifiers.cpp` illustrates this
 - Also shows an important use case which can significantly increase the safety of a library

Mutable Data Members

- Data members may be mutable-qualified to allow modifying them in const-qualified member functions
- This should only be used for members *which do not change the externally visible state of the class*
- Example use cases: caching, lazy evaluation
Basic idea in 05_07_mutable_data_members.cpp
- **Beware:**
These types of caching can easily lead to race conditions in parallel execution



Constexpr

Constexpr Basics

- `constexpr` is a specifier that can be applied to functions and variables and indicates that *it is possible to evaluate their value at compile time*
- Let's look at an example in `05_08_constexpr.cpp`
- The idea is to make a *declaration of **intent***, and codify this requirement as part of an interface
- There are a number of constraints on what can be declared `constexpr`

Constexpr Constraints

Constexpr functions

- Must not be virtual
- Return and parameter types must be literal types
- May not contain some kinds of statements

Prohibited Statements

asm declarations

goto

labels
(other than case and default)

try blocks

variable definitions

- of Non-literal type; or
- with *static* or *thread* storage; or
- with no initialization

<http://en.cppreference.com/w/cpp/concept/LiteralType>

“if constexpr”

- “**if constexpr**” introduces a special type of statement
- Works like an if statement, but is evaluated at compile time
- Crucially, in a template context, the path not chosen is not compiled/checked
- We don’t have a good reason to use this now, but is very valuable in metaprogramming



Conclusion

Summary

- Understand variable and object storage, linkage, and CV qualification
- For classes
 - Distinguish static and non-static members
 - Correctly use const, mutable, and reference qualification
 - Understand the reasoning for explicit single-argument constructors
- Use constexpr for compile-time computation