

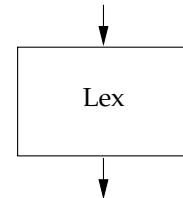
Lex and Yacc: A Brisk Tutorial

Saumya K. Debray
Department of Computer Science
The University of Arizona
Tucson, AZ 85721

Lex: A Scanner Generator

- Helps write programs whose control flow is directed by instances of regular expressions in the input stream.

Table of regular expressions
+ associated actions

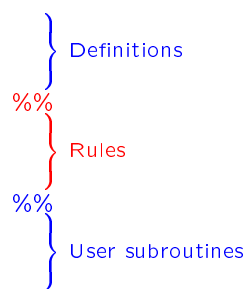


yylex()
(in file **lex.yy.c**)

- **yylex()** :
 - matches the input stream against the table of regular expressions supplied
 - carries out the associated action when a match is found.

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Structure of Lex Specification File



red : required
blue : optional

Rules : line oriented:

`<reg. exp> <whitespace> <action>`

`<reg. exp>` : starts at beginning of line, continues upto first unescaped whitespace

`<action>` : a single C statement
(multiple statements: enclose in braces { }).

unmatched input characters : copied to `stdout`.

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Lex Regular Expressions

Similar to `egrep` :

- operators : " \ [] ^ - ? . * | () \$ / { } % < >
- letters and digits match themselves
- period '.' matches any character (except newline)
- brackets [] enclose a sequence of characters, termed a character class. This matches:
 - any character in the sequence
 - a '-' in a character class denotes an inclusive range, e.g.: [0-9] matches any digit.
 - a ^ at the beginning denotes negation: [^0-9] matches any character that is not a digit.
- a quoted character " " matches that character.
operators can be escaped via \.
- \n, \t match newline, tab.
- | | | | |
|---|-------------|-----|--------------------------|
| { | parentheses | () | grouping |
| | bar | | alternatives |
| | star | * | zero or more occurrences |
| | | + | one or more occurrence |
| | | ? | zero or one occurrence |

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Examples of Lex Rules

- `int printf("keyword: INTEGER\n");`
- `[0-9]+ printf("number\n");`
- `"-"?[0-9]+("."[0-9]+)? printf("number\n");`

Choosing between different possible matches:

When more than one pattern can match the input, lex chooses as follows:

1. The longest match is preferred.
2. Among rules that match the same number of characters, the rule that occurs earliest in the list is preferred.

Example : the pattern

```
"/" "*" "(.|\n)" "*" "/"
```

(intended to match multi-line comments) may consume all the input!

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Communicating with the user program

`yytext` : a character array that contains the actual string that matched a pattern.

`yyleng` : the no. of characters matched.

Example :

- `[a-z][a-z0-9_]* printf("ident: %s\n", yytext);`
- Counting the number of words in a file and their total size:
`[a-zA-Z]+ {nwords += 1; size += yyleng;}`

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Lex source definitions

- Any source not intercepted by lex is copied into the generated program:
 - a line that is not part of a lex rule or action, which begins with a blank or tab, is copied out as above (useful for, e.g., global declarations)
 - anything included between lines containing only `%{` and `%}` is copied out as above (useful, e.g., for preprocessor statements that must start in col.1)
 - anything after the second `%%` delimiter is copied out after the lex output (useful for local function definitions).
- Definitions intended for lex are given before the first `%%`. Any line in this section that does not begin with a blank or tab, or is not enclosed by `{...%}`, is assumed to be defining a lex substitution string of the form

name translation

E.g.:

```
letter    [a-zA-Z]
```

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An Example

```
%{
#include "tokdefs.h"
#include <strings.h>
static int id_or_keywd(char *s);
}%

letter        [a-zA-Z]
digit        [0-9]
alfa         [a-zA-Z0-9_]
whitespace   [ \t\n]
%%
{whitespace}* ;
{comment}     ;
{letter}{alfa}    REPORT(id_or_keywd(yytext), yytext);
...
%%
static struct {
  char *name;
  int val;
} keywd_entry,
keywd_table[] = {
  "char",        CHAR,
  "int",         INT,
  "while",       WHILE,
  ...
};

static int id_or_keywd(s)
char *s;
{
  ...
}
```

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Left Context Sensitivity: Start Conditions

Start conditions are a mechanism for conditionally activating patterns. This is useful for handling

- conceptually different components of an input; or
- situations where the lex defaults (e.g., “longest possible match”) don't work well, e.g., comments or quoted strings.

Basic Idea:

- Declare a set of *start condition names* using
`%Start name1 name2 ...`
- If *scn* is a start condition name, then a pattern prefixed with `<scn>` will only be active when the scanner is in start condition *scn*.
- The scanner begins in start condition **INITIAL**, of which all non-`<scn>`-prefixed rules are members.
- Start conditions such as these are *inclusive*: i.e., being in that start condition adds appropriately prefixed rules to the active rule set.
`flex` also allows *exclusive* start conditions (declared using `%x`), which are sometimes more convenient.

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Example of use of start conditions

```
%Start comment0 comment1
%{
#include "tokens.h"
%}
whitespace    [ \t\n]
digit         [0-9]
intcon        {digit}+
floatcon      {digit}+ "." {digit}+
start_comment "/" "*"

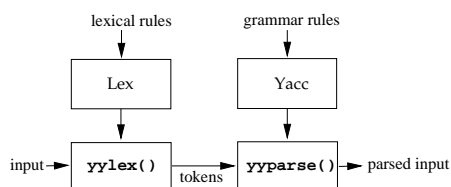
%%
<INITIAL>{start_comment} BEGIN(comment0);
<comment0>"*"          BEGIN(comment1);
<comment0>["*"]         ;
<comment1>"*"          ;
<comment1>"/"          BEGIN(INITIAL);
<comment1>["*/"]       BEGIN(comment0);

{intcon}               return(INTCON);
{floatcon}              return(FLOATCON);
...
%%
...
```

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Yacc: A Parser Generator

- Takes a specification for a CFG, produces an LALR parser.



- Form of a yacc specification file:

```

} Declarations
%%
} Grammar rules
%%
} Programs
```

red : required
blue : optional

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Yacc: Grammar Rules

Terminals (tokens) : Names must be declared:

```
%token name1 name2 ...
```

Any name not declared as a token in the declarations section is assumed to be a nonterminal.

Start symbol :

- may be declared, via: `%start name`
- if not declared explicitly, defaults to the non-terminal on the LHS of the first grammar rule listed.

Productions : A grammar production $A \rightarrow B_1 B_2 \dots B_n$ is written as

$A : B_1 B_2 \dots B_n ;$

Note: Left-recursion is preferred to right-recursion for efficiency reasons.

Example:

```
stmt : KEYWD_IF '(' expr ')' stmt ;
```

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Communication between Scanner and Parser

- The user must supply an integer-valued function `yylex()` that implements the lexical analyzer (scanner).
- If there is a value associated with the token, it should be assigned to the external variable `yylval`.
- The token `error` is reserved for error handling.
- Token numbers: These may be chosen by the user if desired. The default is:
 - chosen by yacc
 - the token no. for a literal is its ASCII value
 - other tokens are assigned numbers starting at 257
 - the endmarker must have a number zero or negative.

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Using Yacc

- Suppose the grammar spec is in a file `foo.y`. Then,

```
yacc foo.y
```

yields a file `y.tab.c` containing the parser constructed by yacc.
The command

```
yacc -v foo.y
```

additionally constructs a file `y.output` containing a description of the parser (useful for debugging).
- The user needs to supply a function `main()` to driver, and a function `yyerror()` that will be called by the parser if there is an error in the input.

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Conflicts and Ambiguities

- Conflicts may be either *shift/reduce* or *reduce/reduce*:
 - In a shift/reduce conflict, the default is to shift.
 - In a reduce/reduce conflict, the default is to *reduce using the first applicable grammar rule*.
- Arithmetic Operators: associativity and precedence can be specified:
Associativity: use `%left`, `%right`, `%nonassoc`
Precedence (Binary Operators):
 - Specify associativity using `%left` etc.
 - Operators within a group have same precedence. Between groups, precedence increases going down.
Precedence (Unary Operators): use `%prec` keyword. This changes the precedence of a rule to be that of the following token.

Example:

```
%left '+' '-'
%left '*' '/'
...
expr : expr '+' expr
    | expr '*' expr
    | '-' expr      %prec '*'
    | ID
```

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Yacc: Error Handling

- The token `error` is reserved for error handling. This can be used in grammar rules, to indicate where error might occur and recovery take place.
- When an error is detected:
 - If an `error` token is specified, the parser pops its stack until it finds a state where the `error` token is legal. It then behaves as if `error` is the current lookahead token, and performs the action encountered.
 - If there is no rule using the `error` token, processing halts when an error is encountered.
- To prevent cascading error messages, the parser remains in an *error state* after detecting an error until 3 tokens have been successfully read and shifted. If an error is encountered when in the error state, no error message is given, and the input token is discarded.

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Yacc Error Handling: (cont'd)

- A rule of the form

```
stmt : error
```

means that on syntax error, the parser would attempt to skip over the offending statement, looking for 3 tokens that can legally follow `stmt`.

- A rule of the form

```
stmt : error ';' ;
```

causes the parser to skip to the next `' ; '` after `stmt`: all intervening tokens are deleted.

- Actions may be associated with these special error rules: these might attempt to (re)initialize tables, reclaim space, turn off code generation, etc.

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Adding error symbols

Their placement is guided by the following (conflicting!) goals:

- as close as possible to the start symbol of the grammar

(to allow recovery without discarding the entire program)

- as close as possible to each terminal symbol

(to allow only a small amount of input to be discarded on an error)

- without introducing conflicts

(this may be difficult; shift/reduce conflicts may be acceptable if they serve to lengthen strings, i.e., delay reporting of errors)

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Error Messages

The user should provide a function `yyerror()` that is called when a syntax error is detected:

```
yyerror(s)
char *s; /* s: a string containing an error msg */
{
    /* usually "syntax error" */
    ...
}
```

More informative error messages :

- line no. in source program : `yylineno`
- token no. causing error : `yychar`

Example :

```
extern int yylineno, yychar;
yyerror(s)
char *s;
{
    fprintf(stderr,
        "%s: token %d on line %d\n",
        /*~~~~~ Ugh: internal token no.?!? */
        s, yychar, yylineno);
}
```

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Controlling error actions

Sometimes we may want to stop discarding tokens, if a certain (synchronizing) token is seen: for this, attach an action `{yyerrok;}`

Example :

```
id_list : id_list ',' ID { yyerrok; }
        | ID
        | error
```

Special-purpose error handling:

- set a global flag to indicate the problem;
- use this flag in `yyerror()` to give better error messages.

Example :

```
compd_stmt : '{' stmt_list '}'
            | '{' stmt_list error {errno = NO_RBRACE;}
            | '{' error '}'
    ...
yyerror(s)
{
    if (errno == NO_RBRACE) printf("missing }\n");
    else ...
}
```

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