

Please note that this survey requires at least a 13" monitor and cannot be completed on a mobile phone.

Consent Form

By completing this online questionnaire (i.e., clicking “Next”), you agree to participate in the study.

The study focuses on investigating the type and amount of information needed for debugging program failures. The study is structured in the form of an online questionnaire with 12 questions, which are split into three parts. Each part includes questions about the same piece of code. The entire survey is expected to take around 20-30 minutes of your time.

As a “thank you”, we will randomly select 10 participants who finished the study to receive a **\$30 Amazon gift card**. Moreover, your participation in this study will help the academic and industrial community gain valuable insight into debugging approaches. The results will be fully anonymized and will be reported in an academic paper, which will be openly available to the community.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time before the final reports are made public.

We do not collect identifying information in this study. However, **if you would like to be considered for the award, withdraw your data from the study at a later stage, and/or be notified when the results of the study are available, you should provide your email address as contact information.** We will also appreciate it if you provide optional demographic information, which will only be shared in an aggregated form and will not be associated with any individual responses.

Thank you in advance for your time.

Your email address (optional):

Experience and Demographics

1. Which of the following describes you the best? (pick all that apply)

- ☐ Software developer or engineer working in industry
- ☐ Software tester working in industry
- ☐ Researcher working in industry (Research Staff Member, Research Fellow, Research Engineer)
- ☐ Researcher working in academia, non-student (Postdoctoral Fellow, Faculty Member)
- ☐ PhD student
- ☐ Master's student
- ☐ Undergraduate student
- ☐ Other

2. How many years of programming experience while in **school/university** do you have? (in any programming language)

- ☐ No experience
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ At least 1 but less than 3 years
- ☐ At least 3 but less than 5 years
- ☐ At least 5 but less than 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

3. How many years of programming experience **outside of school/university** do you have?

- ☐ No experience
- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ At least 1 but less than 3 years
- ☐ At least 3 but less than 5 years
- ☐ At least 5 but less than 10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years

4. How would you rate your programming skill level?

- ☐ Novice: developed a few small programs
- ☐ Intermediate: developed a few large programs
- ☐ Advanced: developed several large software systems

5. What is your software development area? (e.g., web developer, full stack developer, embedded systems developer, ML data analyst)

6. How do you debug your code? (Pick all that apply)

- ☐ I do not debug my code
- ☐ Program logging (e.g., print)
- ☐ Assertions
- ☐ IDE debugger utilities (e.g., breakpoints and stepping)
- ☐ Other

7. What is your country of employment or studies?

8. What is your age?

- ☐ <25
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54

- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ >64
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

9. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary person
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Part I

Part 1/3: Explaining the failure

In this part of the survey, you are given two code snippets: the old version of the code (V1), where an assertion passes, and a new version (V2), where the same assertion fails due to changes made in the code. The goal of this study is to help developers understand **why** changes made in this code resulted in assertion failure.

1. Please select statements you deem important for understanding and debugging the failure (in addition to the changed statements that are clearly important and, thus, already pre-selected below). Click on a statement to select it and click again to deselect it.

Notations: Lines that correspond to each other in V1 and V2 are given the same line numbers. Numbered empty lines indicate statements that were deleted in a version. Changes between versions (“Add”, “Update”, “Delete”) are shown on arrows between code snippets. For simplicity, each “*if*” statement (e.g., in line 12) is annotated with a label showing whether the “*if*” condition is evaluated to *true* or *false*. Gray lines indicate statements that are not executed because they are encapsulated by an “*if*” statement that evaluates to *false*.

V1

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

String format = “yyyyMMddHH:mm:ss”;

3

Date date = new Date();

4

date.year = “003”;

5

date.month = “01”;

6

date.day = “10”;

7

date.time = “15 33 20”;

8

✔

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

}

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

String result;

12

if (date.year.length() == 2) [false]

13

result = “yy”;

14

else

15

result = “yyyy”;

16

int tokenLen = date.month.length();

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

tokenLen = date.day.length();

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

tokenLen = date.time.length();

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

Update

V2

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

String format = “yyyyMMddHH:mm:ss”;

3

Date date = new Date();

4

date.year = “003”;

5

date.month = “01”;

6

date.day = “10”;

7

date.time = “15 33 20”;

8

✖

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

}

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

String result;

12

if (date.year.length() >= 4) [false]

13

result = “yyyy”;

14

else

15

result = “yy”;

16

int tokenLen = date.month.length();

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

tokenLen = date.day.length();

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

tokenLen = date.time.length();

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

2. Please explain the failure in your own words. Specifically, please describe why changes made in this code resulted in the assertion failure.

3. Please explain why you selected these statements as relevant for understanding the failure.

Part II

Part 2/3: Comparing code views

In this part of the survey, you will be given three different views, named A, B, and C. Each view contains two versions of a code snippet: V1 and V2.

Unlike the code given in Part 1, each snippet now only includes a subset of code statements deemed relevant to the failure. Views A, B, and C differ by the subset of statements their code snippet includes. You will be asked to rank the view based on their:

•

Completeness:

include all essential information needed to explain and debug the failure.

•

Conciseness:

do not include unnecessary information, unneeded to explain and debug the failure.

The goal is to identify views that are most helpful to explain and debug the failure.

Note: Clicking on the picture below opens its larger version. You can also click [here](#) to open the same picture in a different viewer.

View A

V1

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✔

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 2) [false]

13

result = “yy”;

14

else

15

result = “yyyy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

V2

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✖

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 4) [false]

13

result = “yyyy”;

14

else

15

result = “yy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

View B

V1

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✔

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 2) [false]

13

result = “yy”;

14

else

15

result = “yyyy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

V2

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✖

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 4) [false]

13

result = “yyyy”;

14

else

15

result = “yy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

View C

V1

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✔

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 2) [false]

13

result = “yy”;

14

else

15

result = “yyyy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

V2

1

public static void main(String[] args){

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

✖

assertEquals(format, getFormat(date));

9

10

public String getFormat(Date date){

11

12

if (date.year.length() == 4) [false]

13

result = “yyyy”;

14

else

15

result = “yy”;

16

17

result = result+getMonthFormat(tokenLen);

18

19

result = result+getDayFormat(tokenLen);

20

21

result = result+getTimeFormat(tokenLen);

22

return result;

23

}

Notations:

Lines that correspond to each other in V1 and V2 are given the same line numbers. Numbered empty lines indicate statements that are either excluded in a particular view or are absent in a code version. Specifically, if a line is annotated by “delete”, the statement is deleted in a version. Otherwise, it is excluded from the view. Changes between versions (“Add”, “Update”, “Delete”) are shown on arrows between code snippets. For simplicity, each “if” statement (e.g., in line 12) is annotated with a label showing whether the “if” condition is evaluated to true or false. Gray lines indicate statements that are not executed because they are encapsulated by an “if” statement that evaluates to false. Colored background highlight the differences between the views.

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4. Please rank views A, B, and C (1 being the best; 3 being the worst). You can drag the view names into the box and then rank them internally. When ranking views, please consider:

- **Completeness:** include all essential information needed to explain and debug the failure.
- **Conciseness:** do not include unnecessary information, unneeded to explain and debug the failure.

Items

View A

View B

View C

Ranking Views

5. Explain your ranking by describing the advantages and disadvantages of each view (given in their sequential order below).

View A:

View B:

View C:

Part III

Part 3/3: Comparing textual explanations

In this part of the survey, you are given three different **textual** explanations of the failure corresponding to the three code views in the previous part. You will need to rank these explanations based on their:

- **Completeness:** include all essential information needed to explain and debug the failure.
- **Conciseness:** do not include unnecessary information, unneeded to explain and debug the failure.

Note: Clicking on the picture below opens its larger version. You can also click [here](#) to open the same picture in a different viewer.

Explanation A

The method `perform(format)` calculates the format of a given date.

The assertion in line 8 checks if the method outputs the same value as in the variable `format`.

Internally, the method computes and returns the value of the variable `result`. However:

1. In V1, `result` is assigned in line 15 to be "yyyy" as `date.year` causes the "if" statement in line 12 to evaluate to false.
2. In V2, despite the change in line 12, the "if" statement in line 12 also evaluates to false.

The variable `result` is, thus, also assigned in line 15 but, due to the change in this line, its value is "yr". Then, in both versions, the variable `result` is further reassigned in lines 17, 18, and 21, based on its previous value and the output of the methods `getMonthFormat` (line 17), `getDayFormat` (line 18), and `getTimeFormat` (line 21) applied on `tokenLen`.

In summary, the change leads to a difference in computing the value of `result` in V1 and V2:

In V1, `result` for such inputs is prefixed with "yyyy" and is equal to the prefix of the variable `format` defined in line 2. In V2, it is rather prefixed with "yr".

This difference causes the output of `perform(format)` to differ from `format` in line 8.

Explanation B

The method `perform(format)` calculates the format of a given date.

The assertion in line 8 checks if the method outputs the same value as in the variable `format`.

Internally, the method computes and returns the value of the variable `result`. However:

1. In V1, `result` is assigned in line 15 to be "yyyy" as `date.year` causes the "if" statement in line 12 to evaluate to false.
2. In V2, despite the change in line 12, the "if" statement in line 12 also evaluates to false.

The variable `result` is, thus, also assigned in line 15 but, due to the change in this line, its value is "yr". Then, in both versions, the variable `result` is further reassigned in line 21 to be a function of its previous value.

In summary, the change leads to a difference in computing the value of `result` in V1 and V2:

In V1, `result` for such inputs is prefixed with "yyyy" and is equal to the prefix of the variable `format` defined in line 2. In V2, it is rather prefixed with "yr".

This difference causes the output of `perform(format)` to differ from `format` in line 8.

Explanation C

The method `perform(format)` calculates the format of a given date.

In this code, the year of the input parameter `date` is initialized in line 4 as "1003".

The assertion in line 8 checks if the method outputs the same value as in the variable `format`.

In "yyyyMMddHHmmss" set in line 2:

1. In V1, `result` is assigned in line 15 to be "yyyy" as `date.year` causes the "if" statement in line 12 to evaluate to false.
2. In V2, despite the change in line 12, the "if" statement in line 12 also evaluates to false.

`date.year` is "1003" and, thus, its length is not equal to 2.

In V2, despite the change in line 12, the "if" statement in line 12 also evaluates to false.

`date.year` is "1003" and, thus, its length is not 8.

The variable `result` is, thus, also assigned in line 15 but, due to the change in this line, its value is "yr". Then, in both versions, the variable `result` is further reassigned in line 21 to be a function of its previous value.

In summary, the change leads to a difference in computing the value of `result` in V1 and V2:

For inputs with years given as 3 digits, e.g., "1003":

In V1, `result` for such inputs is prefixed with "yyyy" and is equal to the prefix of the variable `format` defined in line 2. In V2, it is rather prefixed with "yr".

This difference causes the output of `perform(format)` to differ from `format` in line 8.

Notations: Colored backgrounds highlight the differences between the views.

FTI: Views are given below again, for your reference.

View A

```
1 public static void main(String[] args){
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 public String perform(Date date){
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23 }
```

View B

```
1 public static void main(String[] args){
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 public String perform(Date date){
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23 }
```

View C

```
1 public static void main(String[] args){
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10 public String perform(Date date){
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23 }
```

6. Please focus on the **textual** explanation now (upper part of the picture). Please rank explanations A, B, and C (1 being the best; 3 being the worst). You can drag the explanation names into the box and then rank them internally.

Items

Explanation A

Explanation B

Explanation C

Ranking Explanations

7. Explain your ranking by describing the advantages and disadvantages of each explanation (given in their sequential order below).

Explanation A:

Explanation B:

Explanation C:

8. Which of the following you prefer to see when understanding and debugging the failure?

☐ Code views

☐ Textual explanations

☐ Both

9. Explain your selection.

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10. Have looking at the code views and/or reading the explanations changed your understanding of the failure and why? Would you now augment the explanation you gave in Part 1, Question 3 (you can navigate to your explanation by pressing the back button twice)

11. Please list any suggestions for how the views and textual explanations you liked the most can be improved even further.

12. Do you have any other comments related to this survey?

