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# C Preprocessor

Defining Macros, Include Guards,  
Conditional Compilation



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# The C Preprocessor

- The **preprocessor** is executed **before** a program is compiled
  - Includes code of referenced libraries
  - Performs replacement of symbolic constants and macros
  - Provides conditional code compilation
  - Conditional execution of preprocessor directives
  - ...and more



# Using the #include directive

- The **#include directive** causes a copy of the specified file to be included in the place of the directive:

```
#include <stdlib.h>
#include "custom-list"
```

- If the name is enclosed in **" "**, the preprocessor starts the search in the current directory
- If the name is enclosed in **<>**, the preprocessors searches system directories



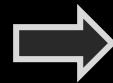
# Using the #define directive

- The **#define** directive creates symbolic constants

```
#define <identifier> <replacement-text>
```

- Replaces all occurrences of **<identifier>** with replacement
- Example:

```
#define SIZE 10
...
char text[SIZE];
text[SIZE - 1] = '\0';
strncpy(text, "Hello", SIZE - 1);
```



```
#define MAX_LENGTH 10
...
char text[10];
text[10 - 1] = '\0';
strncpy(text, "Hello", 10 - 1);
```

# Macros

- A **macro** is a symbolic fragment of code
  - Can take arguments just like a function

```
#define PI 3.14159
#define CIRCLE_AREA(r) ((PI) * (r) * (r))
...
double area = CIRCLE_AREA(5);
printf("area: %f\n", area);
```

Replaces the reference  
with the macro text



```
double area = ((3.14159) * (5) * (5));
printf("area: %f\n", area);
```

# Multiline Macros

- The preprocessor supports multiline macros
  - Lines should end with `\` character to denote the macro continues

```
#define DEBUG 1
#define debug_print(...) \
    do \
    { \
        if (DEBUG) \
            fprintf(stderr, ##__VA_ARGS__); \
    } while (0)
```

- The **do-while(0)** loop prevents replacement side effects
  - More: <http://stackoverflow.com/a/1644898>

# Multiline Macros

## Side Effects



# Macros vs Functions

- Using macros instead of functions is **dangerous**
  - There is no type-checking
  - They often produce unexpected side effects
  - Difficult to debug
- In the past they were used to **reduce function call overhead**
  - Nowadays **inline functions** are supported (since C99)
    - The compiler injects the function instructions in the calling function
    - **Note: inline** is only a hint to the compiler, it may be ignored

# Macros

## Live Demo

# Conditional Compilation

- The **#if** and **#endif** directive allows C to compile certain parts of a program only if a condition is true

```
#define DEBUG 1

int main()
{
    char *fileName = "file.txt";
    FILE* file = fopen(fileName, "r");
    #if DEBUG
        printf("Opened file %s\n", fileName);
    #endif
    ...
}
```

Compiles code if **true**

# Conditional Definition Execution – Example

```
#define DEBUG 1
```

Defines a macro if  
**DEBUG** is set to **1**

```
#if DEBUG
```

```
#define log_err(fmt, ...) \  
    fprintf(stdout, fmt, __VA_ARGS__);
```

```
#else
```

```
#define log_err(M, ...)
```

```
#endif
```

Defines a macro without  
a body otherwise



# Using the Debug Macro – Example

```
int main() {
    char *fileName = "file.txt";
    FILE* file = fopen(fileName, "r");
    if (!file)
    {
        perror(NULL);
        exit(1);
    }

    debug_print("Opened file %s\n", fileName);
    fclose(file);
    debug_print("Closed file %s\n", fileName);
    return 0;
}
```

# Debug Print Macro

## Live Demo

# Standard Predefined Macros

- The C preprocessor has several predefined macros
  - `__LINE__` – expands to the current input line number
  - `__FILE__` – expands to the name of the current input file
  - `__TIME__` – expands to the time preprocessor is run (e.g. 23:03:00)
  - More: <https://gcc.gnu.org/onlinedocs/cpp/Standard-Predefined-Macros.html>
    - `__FILE__` and `__LINE__` are useful for error reporting

# Error Print Macro

- Printing formatted message to the standard error stream

```
#define clean_errno() (errno == 0 ? "None" : strerror(errno))  
#define log_err(M, ...) \  
    fprintf(stderr, "[ERROR] (%s:%d: errno: %s) " M "\n", \  
        __FILE__, __LINE__, clean_errno(), ##__VA_ARGS__)
```

- Accepts message **M** and argument list ...
- Concatenates "**[Error]** ..." with **M** and "**\n**"
- **##\_\_VA\_ARGS\_\_** refers to ...



# Using the Error Print Macro

```
int main()
{
    long mem = 11 << 32;
    char *buffer = malloc(mem);
    if (!buffer)
    {
        log_err("Unable to alloc %ld bytes for buffer", mem);
        exit(1);
    }

    return 0;
}
```

Passing a non-literal  
will not compile

Output:  
[ERROR] (main.c:38: errno: Cannot allocate  
memory) Need 4294967296 bytes for buffer

# Error Print Macro

## Live Demo

# Include Guards

- **Include guards** help avoid double inclusion of header files
- The following code produces a compilation error:

**main.c**

```
#include "geometry.h"
#include "math.h"

int main()
{
    ...
}
```

**geometry.h**

```
#include "math.h"
typedef struct Triangle
{
    Segment segmentA;
    Segment segmentB;
    Segment segmentC;
} Triangle;
```

**math.h**

```
typedef struct Segment
{
    float a;
    float b;
} Segment;
```



- The contents of **math.h** get included twice in **main.c**

# Using Include Guards


- Code is put inside a conditional compilation construct
  - Guaranteed to be included only once inside a compilation unit

## geometry.h

```
#include "math.h"
#ifndef _GEOMETRY_H
#define _GEOMETRY_H

typedef struct Triangle {
    Segment segmentA;
    Segment segmentB;
    Segment segmentC;
} Triangle;

#endif
```




## math.h

```
#ifndef _MATH_H
#define _MATH_H

typedef struct Segment {
    float a;
    float b;
} Segment;

#endif
```





# #pragma once

- **#pragma once** is a non-standard preprocessor directive
  - Acts like an include guard, but is shorter
  - Supported on most major compilers (GCC, Clang, MSVC)

**#pragma once**

```
typedef struct Segment {  
    float a;  
    float b;  
} Segment;
```

Same as enclosing  
code in include guard

# C Programming – Preprocessor



## Questions?



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