



# Chapter 13

## C Preprocessor

C How to Program, 7/e



## OBJECTIVES

In this chapter, you'll:

- Use **#include** to develop large programs.
- Use **#define** to create macros and macros with arguments.
- Use conditional compilation to specify portions of a program that should not always be compiled (such as code that assists you in debugging).
- Display error messages during conditional compilation.
- Use assertions to test whether the values of expressions are correct.



- 13.1** Introduction
- 13.2** `#include` Preprocessor Directive
- 13.3** `#define` Preprocessor Directive: Symbolic Constants
- 13.4** `#define` Preprocessor Directive: Macros
- 13.5** Conditional Compilation
- 13.6** `#error` and `#pragma` Preprocessor Directives
- 13.7** `#` and `##` Operators
- 13.8** Line Numbers
- 13.9** Predefined Symbolic Constants
- 13.10** Assertions
- 13.11** Secure C Programming



## 13.1 Introduction

- ▶ The **C preprocessor** executes *before* a program is compiled.
- ▶ Some actions it performs are the inclusion of other files in the file being compiled, definition of **symbolic constants** and **macros**, **conditional compilation** of program code and **conditional execution of preprocessor directives**.
- ▶ Preprocessor directives begin with **#** and only whitespace characters and comments may appear before a preprocessor directive on a line.



## 13.2 #include Preprocessor Directive

- ▶ The `#include` preprocessor directive has been used throughout this text.
- ▶ The `#include` directive causes a *copy* of a specified file to be included in place of the directive.
- ▶ The two forms of the `#include` directive are:
  - `#include <filename>`  
`#include "filename"`
- ▶ The difference between these is the location the preprocessor begins searches for the file to be included.
- ▶ If the file name is enclosed in quotes, the preprocessor starts searches in the same directory as the file being compiled for the file to be included (and may search other locations, too).



## 13.2 #include Preprocessor Directive (Cont.)

- ▶ This method is normally used to include programmer-defined headers.
- ▶ If the file name is enclosed in angle brackets (< and >)—used for **standard library headers**—the search is performed in an implementation-dependent manner, normally through predesignated compiler and system directories.



## 13.2 #include Preprocessor Directive (Cont.)

- ▶ The `#include` directive is used to include standard library headers such as `stdio.h` and `stdlib.h` (see Fig. 5.10) and with programs consisting of *multiple source files* that are to be compiled together.
- ▶ A header containing declarations common to the separate program files is often created and included in the file.
- ▶ Examples of such declarations are *structure and union declarations, enumerations and function prototypes*.



## 13.3 #define Preprocessor Directive: Symbolic Constants

- ▶ The `#define` directive creates *symbolic constants*—constants represented as symbols—and *macros*—operations defined as symbols.
- ▶ The `#define` directive format is
  - **`#define IDENTIFIER REPLACEMENT-TEXT`**
- ▶ When this line appears in a file, all subsequent occurrences of *identifier* that do *not* appear in string literals will be replaced by *replacement-text* automatically *before* the program is compiled.





## 13.3 #define Preprocessor Directive: Symbolic Constants (Cont.)

- ▶ For example,
  - **#define PI 3.14159**replaces all subsequent occurrences of the symbolic constant **PI** with the numeric constant **3.14159**.
- ▶ *Symbolic constants* enable you to create a name for a constant and use the name throughout the program.
- ▶ If the constant needs to be modified throughout the program, it can be modified *once* in the **#define** directive.
- ▶ When the program is recompiled, all occurrences of the constant in the program will be modified accordingly.



## 13.3 #define Preprocessor Directive: Symbolic Constants (Cont.)

- ▶ Everything to the right of the symbolic constant name replaces the symbolic constant.] For example, `#define PI = 3.14159` causes the preprocessor to replace every occurrence of the identifier `PI` with `= 3.14159`.
- ▶ This is the cause of many subtle logic and syntax errors.
- ▶ For this reason, you may prefer to use `const` variable declarations, such as
  - `const double PI = 3.14159;`in preference to the preceding `#define`. Redefining a symbolic constant with a new value is also an error.



### Good Programming Practice 13.1

Using meaningful names for symbolic constants helps make programs self-documenting.



## Good Programming Practice 13.2

By convention, symbolic constants are defined using only uppercase letters and underscores.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros

- ▶ A **macro** is an identifier defined in a **#define** preprocessor directive.
- ▶ As with symbolic constants, the **macro-identifier** is replaced in the program with the **replacement-text** before the program is compiled.
- ▶ Macros may be defined with or without **arguments**.
- ▶ A macro without arguments is processed like a symbolic constant.
- ▶ In a **macro with arguments**, the *arguments are substituted in the replacement text*, then the macro is **expanded**—i.e., the replacement-text replaces the identifier and argument list in the program.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ [Note: A symbolic constant is a type of macro.]
- ▶ Consider the following *macro definition* with one *argument* for the area of a circle:  

```
#define CIRCLE_AREA( x ) ( ( PI ) * ( x ) * ( x ) )
```
- ▶ Wherever CIRCLE\_AREA(y) appears in the file, the value of y is substituted for x in the replacement-text, the symbolic constant PI is replaced by its value (defined previously) and the macro is expanded in the program.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ For example, the statement

- `area = CIRCLE_AREA( 4 );`

is expanded to

- `area = ( ( 3.14159 ) * ( 4 ) * ( 4 ) );`

then, at compile time, the value of the expression is evaluated and assigned to variable `area`.

- ▶ The *parentheses* around each `x` in the replacement text *force the proper order of evaluation when the macro argument is an expression*.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

► For example, the statement

- `area = CIRCLE_AREA( c + 2 );`

is expanded to

- `area = (( 3.14159 ) * ( c + 2 ) * ( c + 2 ));`

which evaluates *correctly* because the parentheses force the proper order of evaluation.





## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ If the parentheses in the macro definition are omitted, the macro expansion is

- $\text{area} = 3.14159 * c + 2 * c + 2;$

which evaluates *incorrectly* as

- $\text{area} = ( 3.14159 * c ) + ( 2 * c ) + 2;$

because of the rules of operator precedence.



## Common Programming Error 13.1

Forgetting to enclose macro arguments in parentheses in the replacement text can lead to logic errors.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ Macro CIRCLE\_AREA could be defined more safely as a function.
- ▶ Function circleArea
  - `double circleArea( double x )`  
`{`  
`return 3.14159 * x * x;`  
`}`

performs the same calculation as macro CIRCLE\_AREA, but the function's argument is evaluated only once when the function is called.



### Performance Tip 13.1

In the past, macros were often used to replace function calls with inline code to eliminate the function-call overhead. Today's optimizing compilers often inline function calls for you, so many programmers no longer use macros for this purpose. You can also use the C standard's `inline` keyword (see Appendix F).



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ The following is a macro definition with two arguments for the area of a rectangle:
  - **#define** RECTANGLE\_AREA( x, y ) ( ( x ) \* ( y ) )
- ▶ Wherever RECTANGLE\_AREA(x, y) appears in the program, the values of x and y are substituted in the macro replacement text and the macro is expanded in place of the macro name.
- ▶ For example, the statement
  - rectArea = RECTANGLE\_AREA( a + 4, b + 7 );
- ▶ is expanded to
  - rectArea = ( ( a + 4 ) \* ( b + 7 ) );



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ The value of the expression is evaluated at runtime and assigned to variable `rectArea`.
- ▶ The replacement text for a macro or symbolic constant is normally any text on the line after the identifier in the `#define` directive.
- ▶ If the replacement text for a macro or symbolic constant is longer than the remainder of the line, a **backslash** (`\`) must be placed at the end of the line, indicating that the replacement text continues on the next line.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ Symbolic constants and macros can be *discarded* by using the `#undef` preprocessor directive.
- ▶ Directive `#undef` “*undefines*” a symbolic constant or macro name.
- ▶ The `scope` of a symbolic constant or macro is from its definition until it’s undefined with `#undef`, or until the end of the file.
- ▶ Once undefined, a name can be redefined with `#define`.
- ▶ Functions in the standard library sometimes are defined as macros based on other library functions.



## 13.4 #define Preprocessor Directive: Macros (Cont.)

- ▶ A macro commonly defined in the `<stdio.h>` header is
  - **#define** `getchar()` `getc( stdin )`
- ▶ The macro definition of `getchar` uses function `getc` to get one character from the standard input stream.
- ▶ Function `putchar` of the `<stdio.h>` header and the character handling functions of the `<ctype.h>` header often are implemented as macros as well.
- ▶ Expressions with *side effects* (i.e., variable values are modified) should *not* be passed to a macro because macro arguments may be evaluated more than once.





## 13.5 Conditional Compilation

- ▶ **Conditional compilation** enables you to control the execution of preprocessor directives and the compilation of program code.
- ▶ Each conditional preprocessor directive evaluates a constant integer expression.
- ▶ Cast expressions, `sizeof` expressions and enumeration constants cannot be evaluated in preprocessor directives.
- ▶ The conditional preprocessor construct is much like the `if` selection statement.

## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

- ▶ Consider the following preprocessor code:

- `#if !defined(MY_CONSTANT)`  
    `#define MY_CONSTANT 0`  
    `#endif`

Which determines whether `MY_CONSTANT` is *defined*—that is, whether `MY_CONSTANT` has already appeared in an earlier `#define` directive.

- ▶ The expression `defined(MY_CONSTANT)` evaluates to 1 if `MY_CONSTANT` is defined and 0 otherwise.
- ▶ If the result is 0, `!defined(MY_CONSTANT)` evaluates to 1 and `MY_CONSTANT` is defined.
- ▶ Otherwise, the `#define` directive is skipped.



## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

- ▶ Every `#if` construct ends with `#endif`.
- ▶ Directives `#ifdef` and `#ifndef` are shorthand for `#if defined(name)` and `#if !defined(name)`.
- ▶ A multiple-part conditional preprocessor construct may be tested by using the `#elif` (the equivalent of `else if` in an `if` statement) and the `#else` (the equivalent of `else` in an `if` statement) directives.
- ▶ These directives are frequently used to *prevent header files from being included multiple times in the same source file*.
- ▶ We use this technique extensively in the C++ part of this book.

## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

- ▶ During program development, it's often helpful to “comment out” portions of code to prevent them from being compiled.
- ▶ If the code contains multiline comments, `/*` and `*/` cannot be used to accomplish this task, because such comments cannot be nested.
- ▶ Instead, you can use the following preprocessor construct:
  - `#if 0`  
***CODE PREVENTED FROM COMPILING***  
`#endif`
- ▶ To enable the code to be compiled, replace the 0 in the preceding construct with 1.



## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

- ▶ Conditional compilation is commonly used as a *debugging* aid.
- ▶ Many C implementations include **debuggers**, which provide much more powerful features than conditional compilation.
- ▶ If a debugger is not available, `printf` statements are often used to print variable values and to confirm the flow of control.
- ▶ These `printf` statements can be enclosed in conditional preprocessor directives so the statements are compiled only while the debugging process is not completed.



## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

► For example,

- `#ifdef DEBUG`  
    `printf( "variable x = %d\n", x );`  
    `#endif`

causes a `printf` statement to be compiled in the program if the symbolic constant `DEBUG` has been defined (`#define DEBUG`) before directive `#ifdef DEBUG`.



## 13.5 Conditional Compilation (Cont.)

- ▶ When debugging is completed, the `#define` directive is removed from the source file (or commented out) and the `printf` statements inserted for debugging purposes are ignored during compilation.
- ▶ In larger programs, it may be desirable to define several different symbolic constants that control the conditional compilation in separate sections of the source file.
- ▶ Many compilers allow you to define and undefine symbolic constants with a compiler flag so that you do not need to change the code.



## Common Programming Error 13.2

Inserting conditionally compiled `#ifdef` statements for debugging purposes in locations where C currently expects a single statement. In this case, the conditionally compiled statement should be enclosed in a compound statement, so that when the program is compiled with debugging statements, the flow of control of the program is not altered.