Coding Conventions for Igor Pro

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1 Procedures

- Allways put code into external procedure files stored directly on disk
- Filenames are built from the characters `[A-Za-z_-]` and end with `.ipf`
- The file encoding is OS-dependent but the used charset should always be restricted to ASCII characters. Code parts exclusively used with Igor Pro 7 should use UTF-8 as text encoding and specify `#pragma TextEncoding = "UTF-8"`.
- The beginning of each procedure file has `#pragma rtGlobals=3` with optional comment.
- Always use UNIX (LF) end-of-line style

2 Whitespace and Comments

Comments

- Use doxygen for documenting files, functions, macros and constants
- Always add a space before a trailing comment as in

```
if(a < 0)
    b = 1
else // positive numbers (including zero)
    b = 4711
endif
```

- Prefer comments on separate lines instead of trailing comments

Doxygen

- Use `///` to start a doxygen comment and `///<` for documentation after the definition
- Align multiple `@param` arguments and document them in the same order as in the function signature:

```
/// @param pressure     Pressure of the cell
/// @param temperature  Outdoor temperature
/// @param length       Length of a soccer field
Function PerformCalculation(pressure, temperature, length)
    variable pressure, temperature, length

    // code
End
```

- Use `in/out` specifiers for `@param` if the function uses call-by-value and call-by-reference parameters.

```
/// @param[in]  name    Name of the device
/// @param[out] type    Device type
/// @param[out] number  Device number
Function ParseString(name, type, number)
    string name
    variable &type, &number

    // code
End
```

- Optional parameters are documented as

```
/// @param verbose [optional, default = 0] Verbosely output
///                the steps of the performed calculations
Function DoCalculation([verbose])
    variable verbose

    // code
End
```

Whitespace

- Every function should be separated by exactly one newline from other code
- Indentation is done with tabs, a tab consists of four spaces (in case you are coding not in Igor Pro).
- Comments on separate lines have the same indentation level as the surrounding code

- Separate function parameters from local variables and local variables from the rest of the function body by a newline

```
Function CalculatePressure(weight, size)
    variable weight, size

    variable i, numEntries

    // code
End
```

- Add a space around mathematical/binary/comparison operators and assignments, and add a space after a comma or semicolon

```
a = b + c * (d + 1) / 5

if(a < b)
    c = a^2 + b^2
end

Make/O/N={1, 2} data

for(i = 0; i < numWaves; i += 1)
    a = i^2
endfor

if(myStatus && myClock)
    e = f
endif
```

- Try to avoid trailing whitespace, here space is ␣ and tab is ↦

  Good:

```
Function␣DoStuff()
↦print␣"Hi"

↦if(a␣<␣b)
↦   ↦c␣=␣a^2␣+␣b^2
↦end

↦Make/O/N={1,␣2}␣data
End
```

  Bad:

```
Function␣DoStuff()␣
↦print␣"Hi"␣  ↦
```

```
    ⏎
    ⏎if(a␣<␣b)␣␣␣␣
    ⏎    ⏎c␣=␣a^2␣+␣b^2    ⏎
    ⏎end␣
    ⏎
    ⏎Make/O/N={1,␣2}␣data␣
End
```

- Surround blocks like `if/endif`, `for/endfor`, `do/while`, `switch/endswitch`, `strswitch/endswitch` with a newline if what they express is a logical group of its own

```
for(i = 0; i < numEntries; i += 1)
    // code
endfor

if(a > b)
    c = d
elseif(a == b)
    c = e
else
    c = 0
endif

switch(mode)
    case MODE1:
        a = "myString"
        break
    case MODE2:
        a = "someOtherString"
        break
    default:
        Abort "unknown mode"
        break
endswitch
```

According to that reasoning the following snippet has no newline before `for` and `if`

```
numEntries = ItemsInList(list)
for(i = 0; i < numEntries; i += 1)
    // code
endfor

NVAR num = root:fancyNumber
if(num < 5)
```

```
    // code
endif
```

When mutiple end statements match

```
for(i = 0; i < numEntries; i += 1)
    // code

    if(i < 5)
        // code
    endif
endfor
```

you should not add a trailing newline.

- There is no whitespace between different flags of an operation and no whitespace around = if used in a flag assignment.

  Good:

  ```
  Wave/Z/T/SDFR=dfr wv = myWave

  Function/S DoStuff()
      // code
  End
  ```

  Bad:

  ```
  Wave /Z /T /SDFR = dfr wv = myWave
  ```

- The & in a call-by-reference parameter is attached to the name

  Good:

  ```
  Function DoStuff(length, height, weight)
      variable &length, &height, &weight

      // code
  End
  ```

  Bad:

  ```
  Function DoStuff(length, height, weight)
      variable& length, & height,& weight

      // code
  End
  ```

3 Code

3.1 General

- Line length should not exceed 80 characters

- Use `camelCase` for variable/string/wave/dfref names and `CamelCase` for structures
- Prefer structure-based GUI control procedures over old-style functions
- The variables `i, j, k, l` are reserved for loop counters, from outer to inner loops
- Use free waves for temporary waves
- Write your code as much as possible without `SetDataFolder`. Properly document if your function expects a certain folder to be the current data folder at the time of the function call. Always restore the previously active current data folder before returning from the function.
- Although Igor Pro code is case-insensitive use the offical upper/lower case as shown in the Igor Pro Help files for better readability

  ```
  Make/N=(10) data
  AppendToGraph/W=$graph data
  WAVE/Z wv
  SVAR sv = abcd
  STRUCT Rectangular rect
  print ItemsInList(list)
  ```

  except for the following two cases:

  ```
  variable storageCount
  string name
  ```

- Variable and function definitions and references to them must also never vary in case
- Don't use variables for storing the result which is then returned.

  Good:

  ```
  if(someCondition)
      // code
      return 0
  else
      // code
      return 1
  endif
  // if it is important to know that the returned value
  // is a status, name the function something like GetStatusForFoo
  // and/or use the @return doxygen comment for explaining its meaning
  ```

Bad:

```
variable status

// code

if(someCondition)
    // code
    status = 0
else
    // code
    status = 1
endif

return status
```

- Avoid commented out code
- Don't initialize variables and strings if not required and always initialize variables in their own line.

  Good:

  ```
  variable i = 1
  variable numEntries, maxLength
  string list
  ```

  Bad:

  ```
  variable i = 0, numEntries = ItemsInList(list), maxLength
  string list = ""
  ```

- Don't use the default value for an optional argument

  Good:

  ```
  StringFromList(0, list)
  ```

  Bad:

  ```
  StringFromList(0, list, ";")
  ```

- Use parentheses sparingly

  Good:

  ```
  variable a = b * (1 + 2)

  if(a < b || a < c)
      // code
  endif
  ```

Bad:

```
variable a = (b * (1 + 2))

if((a < b) || (a < c))
    // code
endif
```

- Use parentheses when combining operators with the same precedence

  Good:

```
if((A || B) && C)
    // code
endif

if(A == (B >= C))
    // code
endif
```

  Bad:

```
if(A || B && C) // same as above as these are left to right
    // code
endif

if(A == B >= C) // same as above as these are right to left
    // code
endif
```

  The reason is that remembering the exact associativity is too error-prone. See also `DisplayHelpTopic "Operators"`.

3.2 Constants

- Static constants, which are required only in one file, should be defined at the top of the file
- Global constants are named with all caps and underlines and are collated in a single file
- Explain magic numbers in a comment

```
static Constant DEFAULT_WAVE_SIZE = 128 // equals 2^8 which is
                                        // the width of the DAC signal
```

3.3 Macros

- Use Macros only for window recreation macros

- Try to avoid changing window recreation macros by hand. Write instead a function to reset the panel to the default state and let Igor Pro rewrite the macro by `DoWindow/R`.

3.4 Functions

- Try to keep their length below 50 lines (or half the screen height)
- Use `CamelCase` for function names (optionally prefixed by `SomeString_` denoting the filename)
- Make them `static` if they are only required inside the same procedure file
- Define all variables at the top of the function body as in

```
Function CalculatePressure(weight, size)
    variable weight, size

    variable i, numEntries

    // code
End
```

The reason for this rule is that there is no block-scope in Igor Pro, i. e.

```
if(someCondition)
    variable a = 4711
end

print a
```

is valid code. And that certainly will confuse people coming from C/C++.

4 Links and Literature

- ASCII: `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASCII`
- Doxygen: `http://www.stack.nl/~dimitri/doxygen/index.html`
- Git settings for Igor Pro code: `http://www.igorexchange.com/node/6013`
- Robert C. Martin, Clean Code: A Handbook of Agile Software Craftsmanship, Prentice Hall (2008)
- How to write good commit messages: `http://who-t.blogspot.de/2009/12/on-commit-messages.html`