

CH-230-A

Programming in C and C++

C/C++

Tutorial 12

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Namespaces (1)

- ▶ While developing large projects, the risk of running into a name clash is high
 - ▶ Multiple programmers could use the same names for their classes, functions, etc. At the linking stage, name collisions can arise
 - ▶ You can have the same problem when using third party developed libraries
- ▶ Solutions found in the past, consisting on appending specific prefixes, are not appealing

Namespaces (2)

- ▶ A namespace introduces a further level of code protection
- ▶ Elements belonging to the same namespace can refer to each other without any special syntax
- ▶ Elements in different namespaces can refer to each other just by using a designed syntax
 - ▶ They have to explicitly declare that they are referring to a different namespace

Creating a Namespace

- ▶ A namespace is created using the `namespace` keyword at the file level

```
1 namespace CPPcourse {  
2     void f1() { ... }  
3     class class1 { ... };  
4 }
```

- ▶ Namespace declaration can be split over multiple files without creating redefinition problems
- ▶ `namespace.h`
- ▶ `namespace.cpp`

Using Names from a Namespace

Three ways:

- ▶ Import the whole namespace
`using namespace CPPcourse;`
- ▶ Import a specific name from a namespace

```
1 using CPPcourse::FirstExample;  
2 FirstExample a("Try this");
```

- ▶ Using complete name specification
`CPPcourse::FirstExample a("Try this");`

Examples Revised

- ▶ Then in all former examples
`using namespace std;`
was introduced to use standard C++ classes, which are declared in the `std` namespace
- ▶ In header files we have used full name specification
`std::string name;`
- ▶ Never use the `using` directive in a header file, use full name qualification instead
 - ▶ While writing a header file you do not know what your potential client will need in terms of namespaces

Final Remarks on Namespaces

- ▶ If a namespace's name is too "awkward" to use, it is possible to create an alias
`namespace shortName = AliasForANameTooLongToBeUsed;`
- ▶ From now on we can use `shortName` instead of the alias it points to
- ▶ Namespaces can be nested
- ▶ More details in Eckel's book (chapter 10)

static Data Members

- ▶ A `static` data member is shared among all the instances of a class
 - ▶ It creates a sort of class variable
- ▶ It exists even if no instances are created
- ▶ Storage must be explicitly allocated outside of class definition
- ▶ Can be useful to define class constants
 - ▶ Using `const` as modifier for a data member does not yield the desired results (as class constant)
- ▶ `staticexample.cpp`

static Methods

- ▶ Also methods can be declared as `static`
- ▶ Static methods can access only static data members and can call only static methods
- ▶ Static methods can be called referring to an instance or to the class
 - ▶ Like `static` data members they are class methods
- ▶ `staticshapes.cpp`

When Should we Use `static`?

No general rules, but some generic indications:

- ▶ When creating class level constants
- ▶ When you devise some information which belongs to the class rather than to instances
- ▶ When a method needs to access data members but it is not logically tied to a specific instance

Inline Methods (1)

- ▶ C is well appreciated as it is an efficient language
 - ▶ The UNIX operating system relies on C
- ▶ C++ cannot give up C efficiency
- ▶ Inline methods are designed to improve the performance of C++ programs
 - ▶ No semantic alterations w.r.t. non-inline methods

Inline Methods (2)

- ▶ A method call is equivalent to a procedure call
 - ▶ Push arguments onto the stack (or register)
 - ▶ Execute a CALL-like instruction
 - ▶ Execute function/method code and then return
 - ▶ Stack cleanup
- ▶ For small methods the overhead of the call could take more time than code execution
 - ▶ Think for example of getter or setter methods, where you have just one instruction as body
 - ▶ Moreover those methods are likely to be called frequently

Inline Methods (3)

- ▶ An `inline` function is expanded in place, rather than called
 - ▶ Instead of a regular call, function code is directly inserted
- ▶ You trade off speed for size
 - ▶ No call overhead, but your code could grow as the body of the function will be copied many times
- ▶ Good candidates for being `inline` are short methods that are frequently called

Inline Methods (4)

How to create inline methods - two possibilities:

- ▶ Put the definition of the method inside the class declaration
`inlineinside.h` `inlineinside.cpp`

- ▶ Use the keyword `inline` and write the definition outside the class declaration

`inlineoutside.h` `inlineoutside.cpp`

Put the `inline` function definition in the same header file where the class is declared

Inline Methods: How Do they Work?

- ▶ When the compiler finds the definition of an inline method it stores its signature and its code in its symbol table
- ▶ When it finds a call to an inline method it checks type correctness and replaces/copies the code
 - ▶ C preprocessor macros offered similar advantages, but no type checking was enforced
 - ▶ Nasty to find bugs which could be generated
 - ▶ Preprocessor macros have no concept of scoping

Inline Methods: Final Remarks

- ▶ Not everything declared as `inline` by the programmer will necessarily be inlined by the compiler (`inline` is just a hint)
 - ▶ If a method includes loops it is unlikely that it will be expanded
- ▶ Defining inline methods outside class declaration increases code readability
- ▶ Multiple inclusions of headers with inline methods will not result in redefinition problems

The Implicit Pointer `this`

- ▶ The reserved keyword `this` is a pointer to the current instance of a class
- ▶ `this` is silently passed by the compiler as an argument to every method call
 - ▶ Except of course to static methods. Why?
- ▶ `thisexample.cpp`
- ▶ Will be very useful when implementing overloaded operators

friend Functions

It is possible to "break" the protection mechanism, i.e., to let a class or a function access non-public data members of a class

- ▶ Is this needed? Sometimes yes, if getting through the getter and setter methods becomes difficult to manage
- ▶ We will see that this will be very important while redefining operators
- ▶ Be aware: when using `friend` elements, you break the information hiding mechanism
- ▶ Do not misuse it

friend: How to Create

- ▶ In the class declaration, declare a "method" with the `friend` modifier
 - ▶ That indicates a function which can access class data members
 - ▶ The function has to be defined later, but remember that it is not a method
 - ▶ `friendexample.cpp`
- ▶ It is also possible to create friend classes, i.e., classes which can access private data of other classes