
GHDL Documentation

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This manual is the user and reference manual for GHDL. It does not contain an introduction to VHDL. Thus, the reader should have at least a basic knowledge of VHDL. A good knowledge of VHDL language reference manual (usually called LRM) is a plus.

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15.08.2017 - GHDL 0.34 was released.

23.10.2015 - GHDL 0.33 was released.

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1.1 What is VHDL?

VHDL is an acronym for Very High Speed Integrated Circuit (**VHSIC**) Hardware Description Language (**HDL**), which is a programming language used to describe a logic circuit by function, data flow behavior, or structure.

Although VHDL was not designed for writing general purpose programs, VHDL *is* a programming language, and you can write any algorithm with it. If you are able to write programs, you will find in VHDL features similar to those found in procedural languages such as *C*, *Python*, or *Ada*. Indeed, VHDL derives most of its syntax and semantics from *Ada*. Knowing *Ada* is an advantage for learning VHDL (it is an advantage in general as well).

However, VHDL was not designed as a general purpose language but as an *HDL*. As the name implies, VHDL aims at modeling or documenting electronics systems. Due to the nature of hardware components which are always running, VHDL is a highly concurrent language, built upon an event-based timing model.

Like a program written in any other language, a VHDL program can be executed. Since VHDL is used to model designs, the term *simulation* is often used instead of *execution*, with the same meaning. At the same time, like a design written in another *HDL*, a set of VHDL sources can be transformed with a *synthesis tool* into a netlist, that is, a detailed gate-level implementation.

The development of VHDL started in 1983 and the standard is named **IEEE 1076**. Four revisions exist: 1987, 1993, 2002 and 2008. The standardization is handled by the VHDL Analysis and Standardization Group (**VASG/P1076**).

1.2 What is GHDL?

GHDL is a shorthand for *G Hardware Design Language* (currently, *G* has no meaning). It is a VHDL compiler that can execute (nearly) any VHDL program. GHDL is *not* a synthesis tool: you cannot create a netlist with GHDL (yet).

Unlike some other simulators, GHDL is a compiler: it directly translates a VHDL file to machine code, without using an intermediary language such as *C* or *C++*. Therefore, the compiled code should be faster and the analysis time should be shorter than with a compiler using an intermediary language.

GHDL can use multiple back-ends, i.e. code generators, (**GCC**, **LLVM** or **x86/i386** only, a built-in one) and runs on **GNU/Linux**, **Windows**™ and **macOS**™, both on x86 and on x86_64.

The current version of GHDL does not contain any graphical viewer: you cannot see signal waves. You can still check the behavior of your design with a test bench. Moreover, the current version can produce a [GHW](#), [VCD](#) or *FST* files which can be viewed with a [waveform viewer](#), such as [GtkWave](#).

GHDL aims at implementing VHDL as defined by [IEEE 1076](#). It supports the 1987, 1993 and 2002 revisions and, partially, the latest, 2008. [PSL](#) is also partially supported.

Several third party projects are supported: [VUnit](#), [OSVVM](#), [cocotb](#) (through the [VPI interface](#)), ...

1.3 Who uses GHDL?

The first step might be to use GHDL and explore its possibilities in an own project. If you are new to VHDL, see the [Quick Start Guide](#) for an introduction. Furthermore, we encourage you to read [Invoking GHDL](#), where the most commonly used options are explained. You can also check the complete [Command Reference](#).

If you are more familiar with GHDL, you might start asking yourself how it works internally. Then, you might find [Implementation of VHDL](#) and [Implementation of VITAL](#) interesting.

While using GHDL, you might find flaws, such as bugs, missing features, typos in the documentation or topics which are still not covered. In order to improve GHDL, we welcome bug reports, suggestions and contributions for any aspect of GHDL. Either if it's a bug or an enhancement, have a look at the [bug tracker](#) and [feature requests](#) to see if someone already told us about it. You might find a solution there.

If you found no information on your topic, please, report so that we are aware! You can reach us through various ways: [mail](#) or open a [pull request](#).

Hint: Since the development of GHDL started fifteen years ago, multiple platforms have been used as a support for both distribution and getting feedback. However, the development is now centralized in github.

Tip: [How To Ask Questions The Smart Way](#)

2.1 Reporting bugs

Tip:

- If the compiler crashes, this is a bug. Reliable tools never crash.
- If the compiler emits an error message for a perfectly valid input or does not emit an error message for an invalid input, this may be a bug.
- If the executable created from your VHDL sources crashes, this may be a bug at runtime or the code itself may be wrong. However, since VHDL has a notion of pointers, an erroneous VHDL program (using invalid pointers for example) may crash.

- If a compiler message is not clear enough, please tell us. The error messages can be improved, but we have not enough experience with them.
-

Please, report issues of this kind through [GitHub](#), as this allows us to categorize issues into groups and assign developers to them. You can track the issue's state and see how it's getting solved.

Important: To make it easier, please elaborate a *Minimum (non) Working Example (MWE)* prior to sending the report, so that the possible bug source is isolated. Shall the MWE compile and run, it is a good idea to make it look like a test and make an assert statement should finish the execution; the severity level *note* indicates success, while a severity level *failure* indicates failure.

Then, please include enough information for the maintainers to reproduce the problem. This includes:

- Operating system and version of GHDL (you can get it with `ghdl --version`).
 - Whether you have built GHDL from sources (provide short SHA of the used commit) or used the binary distribution (tell which release/tag).
 - If you cannot compile, please report which compiler you are using and the version.
 - Content of the input files which make the MWE
 - Description of the problem:
 - Comment explaining whether the MWE should compile or not; if yes, whether or not it should run until the assertion.
 - What you expected to happen and what you actually get. If you know the LRM well enough, please specify the paragraph which might be not well implemented.
 - Samples of any log.
 - Anything else that you think would be helpful.
-

Note: If you don't know the LRM, be aware that an issue claimed as bug report may be rejected because there is no bug according to it. GHDL aims at implementing VHDL as defined in [IEEE 1076](#). However, some other tools allow constructs which do not fully follow the standard revisions. Therefore, comparisons with other VHDL is not a solid argument. Some of them are supported by GHDL (see [IEEE library pitfalls](#)), but any such enhancement will have very low priority.

2.2 Requesting enhancements

All enhancements and feature requests are welcome. Please [open a new issue](#) to report any, so you can track the request's status and implementation. Depending on the complexity of the request, you may want to [chat on Gitter](#), to polish it before opening an issue.

2.3 Improving the documentation

If you found a mistake in the documentation, please send a comment. If you didn't understand some parts of this manual, please tell us. English is not our mother tongue, so this documentation may not be well-written.

Likewise, rewriting part of the documentation or missing content (such as, examples) is a good way to improve it. Since it automatically is built from *reStructuredText* and *Markdown* sources, you can fork, modify and request the maintainers to pull your copy. See [Fork, modify and pull-request](#).

2.4 Fork, modify and pull-request

Tip:

- Before starting any modification, you might want to have a look at [pull requests](#) and [issues](#), to check which other contributions are being made or have been made. If you observe that the modifications you are about to start might conflict with any other, please [comment](#) or open a [pull request](#) to coordinate.
 - See section [Directory Structure](#) to faster find the location of the sources you need to modify, and/or to know where to place new ones.
-

Contributing source code/documentation via [Git](#) is very easy. Although we don't provide direct write access to our repositories, the project is hosted at GitHub, which follows a fork, edit and pull-request [flow](#). That is:

1. Make a copy ([fork](#)) of the project.
 2. Do the changes you wish (edit, add, rename, move and/or delete).
 3. When you think that the changes are ready to be merged, you notify the maintainers by opening a [Pull Request](#) (PR).
 4. The maintainers will review the proposed changes and will reply in the corresponding thread if any further modification is required. If so, you can keep adding commits to the same branch, and the PR will be automatically updated.
 5. Last, the maintainers will merge your branch. You will be notified, the PR will be closed, and you'll be allowed to delete the branch, if you want.
-

Tip:

- It is recommended to read [A successful Git branching model](#) for a reference on how maintainers expect to handle multiple branches. However, our actual model is not as exhaustive as explained there.
 - Some commit messages can [automatically close](#) issues. This is a very useful feature, which you are not required to use. However beware that using *fix* anywhere in the commit message can have side effects. If you closed any issue unexpectedly, just reply to it (even if it's closed) so that maintainers can check it.
 - It is recommended to read [Coding Style](#) before contributing modifications to Ada sources.
-

2.5 Related interesting projects

If you have an interesting project, please send us feedback or get listed on our [Who uses GHDL?](#) page.

Copyrights | Licenses

- The GHDL front-end, package `std.textio` and the runtime library, `grt`, are given under [GNU GPLv2](#).
- The documentation is given under [CC-BY-SA](#).

Warning: As a consequence of the runtime copyright, you are not allowed to distribute an executable produced by GHDL without the VHDL sources. To my mind, this is not a real restriction, since it is pointless to distribute VHDL executable. Please, send a comment ([Requesting enhancements](#)) if you don't like this policy.

- The following packages are copyrighted by third parties (see corresponding sources for more information):
 - These from library `ieee` are copyrighted by [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers \(IEEE\)](#) :
 - * `numeric_bit` and `numeric_std`: the source files may be distributed without change, except as permitted by the standard; these may not be sold or distributed for profit. [see also [IEEE 1076.3](#)]
 - * `std_logic_1164`, `Math_Real` and `Math_Complex`
 - * `VITAL_Primitives`, `VITAL_Timing` and `VITAL_Memory` [see also [IEEE 1076.4](#)]
 - The following sources may be used and distributed without restriction, provided that the copyright statements are not removed from the files and that any derivative work contains the copyright notice.
 - * `synopsys` directory: `std_logic_arith`, `std_logic_signed`, `std_logic_unsigned` and `std_logic_textio` are copyrighted by [Synopsys, Inc.](#)
 - * `mentor` directory: `std_logic_arith` is copyrighted by [Mentor Graphics](#)

3.1 GNU GPLv2

GHDL is copyright © 2002 - 2017 Tristan Gingold.

This program is free software; you can redistribute it and/or modify it under the terms of the GNU General Public License as published by the Free Software Foundation; either version 2 of the License, or (at your option) any later version.

This program is distributed in the hope that it will be useful, but **WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY**; without even the implied warranty of MERCHANTABILITY or FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. See the [GNU General Public License](#) for more details.

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- No additional restrictions: you may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

See [CC-BY-SA-4.0 Legal Code](#) for more details.

3.3 List of Contributors

Contributor ¹	Role
Baggett, Jonas	signal selection
Bertram, Felix	VPI interface
Davis, Brian	Windows Mcode builds
Drummond, Brian	GCC 4.8.2 update, OSVVM port, some bugfixes
Gingold, Tristan ²	Sole author of GHDL as a whole
Jensen, Adam	FreeBSD builds
Koch, Markus	vendor pre-compile script for Lattice (GNU/Linux)
Koontz, David	Mac OSX builds, LRM compliance work, bugfix analyses
Lehmann, Patrick	Windows compile scripts, vendor library pre-compile scripts (win+lin), building in MinGW, AppVeyor integration.
Martinez-Corral, Unai	Docker builds, Travis-CI & Docker, adapt/fix RTD theme
van Rantwijk, Joris	Debian packaging

Only those who made substantial contributions are shown in the table above, but many others contributed with minor patches. You can find a list at

With apologies to anyone who ought to be either on this table or in the GitHub contributor list, but isn't. Thanks also to all those who have reported bugs and support issues, and often patches and testcases to either the late gna! website or sourceforge.net/p/ghdl-updates/tickets .

¹ In alphabetical order.

² Maintainer.

Part I

GHDL usage

In this chapter, you will learn how to use *GHDL* by working on a few examples.

4.1 The ‘Hello world’ program

To illustrate the large purpose of *VHDL*, here is a commented ‘Hello world’ program which saved in a file named `hello.vhdl`:

```
-- Hello world program.
use std.textio.all; -- Imports the standard textio package.

-- Defines a design entity, without any ports.
entity hello_world is
end hello_world;

architecture behaviour of hello_world is
begin
  process
    variable l : line;
  begin
    write (l, String'("Hello world!"));
    writeline (output, l);
    wait;
  end process;
end behaviour;
```

Tip:

- Both `.vhdl` and `.vhd` extensions are used for VHDL source files, while `.v` is used for Verilog.
- Unless you use especial characters, either *UTF-8* or *ISO-8859-1* encodings can be used. However, if you do, the latter should be used. The standard defines ASCII (7-bit encoding) or ISO Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1) as default. However, GHDL has a relaxing option, `--mb-comments` (multi byte), to allow UTF-8 or other encodings in comments.

- First, you have to compile the file; this is called *analysis* of a design file in *VHDL* terms. Run `ghdl -a hello.vhdl` in the *shell*. This command creates or updates a file `work-obj93.cf`, which describes the library work.
- Then, run `ghdl -e hello_world` in the *shell*. Option `-e` means *elaborate*, which is used to build a design, with the `hello_world` entity at the top of the hierarchy.
- Last, you can directly launch the simulation running `ghdl -r hello_world` in the *shell*. The result of the simulation will be shown on screen:

```
Hello world!
```

Hint: If a GCC/LLVM variant of *GHDL* is used:

- *Analysis* generates a file, `hello.o`, which is the object file corresponding to your *VHDL* program. This is not created with `mcode`.
- The elaboration step is compulsory after the analysis and prior to launching the simulation; This will generate an executable binary named `hello_world`.
- As a result, `-r` is just a passthrough to the binary generated in the *elaboration*. Therefore, the executable can be run directly, `./hello_world`. See `-r` for more information.

Hint: `-e` can be bypassed with `mcode`, since `-r` actually elaborates the design and saves it on memory before running the simulation. But you can still use it to check for some elaboration problems.

4.2 The *heartbeat* program

```
entity hello_world is
  port ( clk: out std_logic; )
end heartbeat;

architecture behaviour of hello_world is
begin
  -- Clock process definition
  clk_process: process
  begin
    clk <= '0';
    wait for clk_period/2;
    clk <= '1';
    wait for clk_period/2;
  end process;
end behaviour;
```

4.3 A full adder

VHDL is generally used for hardware design. This example starts with a *full adder* described in a file named `adder.vhdl`:

```
entity adder is
  -- `i0`, `i1` and the carry-in `ci` are inputs of the adder.
  -- `s` is the sum output, `co` is the carry-out.
  port (i0, i1 : in bit; ci : in bit; s : out bit; co : out bit);
end adder;
```

```

architecture rtl of adder is
begin
    -- This full-adder architecture contains two concurrent assignment.
    -- Compute the sum.
    s <= i0 xor i1 xor ci;
    -- Compute the carry.
    co <= (i0 and i1) or (i0 and ci) or (i1 and ci);
end rtl;

```

You can analyze this design file, `ghdl -a adder.vhdl`, and try to execute the *adder* design. But this is useless, since nothing externally visible will happen. In order to check this full adder, a *testbench* has to be run. This testbench is very simple, since the adder is also simple: it checks exhaustively all inputs. Note that only the behaviour is tested, timing constraints are not checked. A file named `adder_tb.vhdl` contains the testbench for the adder:

```

-- A testbench has no ports.
entity adder_tb is
end adder_tb;

architecture behav of adder_tb is
    -- Declaration of the component that will be instantiated.
    component adder
        port (i0, i1 : in bit; ci : in bit; s : out bit; co : out bit);
    end component;

    -- Specifies which entity is bound with the component.
    for adder_0: adder use entity work.adder;
    signal i0, i1, ci, s, co : bit;
begin
    -- Component instantiation.
    adder_0: adder port map (i0 => i0, i1 => i1, ci => ci,
                           s => s, co => co);

    -- This process does the real job.
    process
        type pattern_type is record
            -- The inputs of the adder.
            i0, i1, ci : bit;
            -- The expected outputs of the adder.
            s, co : bit;
        end record;
        -- The patterns to apply.
        type pattern_array is array (natural range <>) of pattern_type;
        constant patterns : pattern_array :=
            (('0', '0', '0', '0', '0'),
            ('0', '0', '1', '1', '0'),
            ('0', '1', '0', '1', '0'),
            ('0', '1', '1', '0', '1'),
            ('1', '0', '0', '1', '0'),
            ('1', '0', '1', '0', '1'),
            ('1', '1', '0', '0', '1'),
            ('1', '1', '1', '1', '1'));
    begin
        -- Check each pattern.
        for i in patterns'range loop
            -- Set the inputs.
            i0 <= patterns(i).i0;
            i1 <= patterns(i).i1;
            ci <= patterns(i).ci;
            -- Wait for the results.
            wait for 1 ns;
            -- Check the outputs.

```

```
    assert s = patterns(i).s
      report "bad sum value" severity error;
    assert co = patterns(i).co
      report "bad carry out value" severity error;
  end loop;
  assert false report "end of test" severity note;
  -- Wait forever; this will finish the simulation.
  wait;
end process;
end behav;
```

As usual, you should analyze the design, `ghdl -a adder_tb.vhdl`.

Hint: Then, if required, elaborate the testbench: `ghdl -e adder_tb`. You do not need to specify which object files are required, since GHDL knows them and automatically adds them.

Now, it is time to run the testbench, `ghdl -r adder_tb`, and check the result on screen:

```
adder_tb.vhdl:52:7:(assertion note): end of test
```

If your design is rather complex, you'd like to inspect signals. Signal values can be dumped using multiple formats (see section '[Export waveforms](#)' for more information). The resulting file can be read with a wave viewer such as [GtkWave](#).

As explained in the [manual](#), GtkWave '*relies on a post-mortem approach through the use of dumpfiles*'. Therefore, you should first simulate your design and dump a waveform file, say VCD: `ghdl -r adder_tb --vcd=adder.vcd`. Then, you can view the dump: `gtkwave adder.vcd`.

See section '[Simulation options](#)', for more details on other runtime options.

4.4 Starting with a design

Unless you are only studying VHDL, you will work with larger designs than the ones of the previous examples. Let's see how to analyze and run a bigger design, such as the DLX model suite written by Peter Ashenden which is distributed under the terms of the GNU General Public License. A copy is kept on ghdl.free.fr/dlx.tar.gz.

- First, untar the sources: `tar zxvf dlx.tar.gz`.

Hint: In order not to pollute the sources with the library, it is a good idea to create a `work/` subdirectory for the *WORK* library. To any GHDL commands, we will add the `--workdir=work` option, so that all files generated by the compiler (except the executable) will be placed in this directory.

```
$ cd dlx
$ mkdir work
```

-
- Then, we will run the `dlx_test_behaviour` design. We need to analyze all the design units for the design hierarchy, in the correct order. GHDL provides an easy way to do this, by importing the sources, `ghdl -i --workdir=work *.vhdl`.
 - GHDL knows all the design units of the DLX, but no one have been analyzed. Run the make option, `ghdl -m --workdir=work dlx_test_behaviour`, which analyzes and elaborates a design. This creates many files in the `work/` directory, and (GCC/LLVM only) the `dlx_test_behaviour` executable in the current directory.

Hint: The simulation needs to have a DLX program contained in the file `dlx.out`. This memory image will be

loaded in the DLX memory. Just take one sample: `cp test_loop.out dlx.out`.

- Now, you can run the test suite: `ghdl -r --workdir=work dlx_test_behaviour`. The test bench monitors the bus and displays each instruction executed. It finishes with an assertion of severity level `note`:

```
dlx-behaviour.vhdl:395:11:(assertion note): TRAP instruction
encountered, execution halted
```

- Last, since the clock is still running, you have to manually stop the program with the `C-c` key sequence. This behavior prevents you from running the test bench in batch mode. However, you may force the simulator to stop when an assertion above or equal a certain severity level occurs. To do so, call run with this option instead: `ghdl -r --workdir=work dlx_test_behaviour --assert-level=note``. With this option, the program stops just after the previous message:

```
dlx-behaviour.vhdl:395:11:(assertion note): TRAP instruction
encountered, execution halted
error: assertion failed
```

Tip: If you want to make room on your hard drive, you can either:

- Clean the design library with the GHDL command `ghdl --clean --workdir=work`. This removes the executable and all the object files. If you want to rebuild the design at this point, just do the `make` command as shown above.
 - Remove the design library with the GHDL command `ghdl --remove --workdir=work`. This removes the executable, all the object files and the library file. If you want to rebuild the design, you have to import the sources again, and to make the design.
 - Remove the `work/` directory: `rm -rf work`. Only the executable is kept. If you want to rebuild the design, create the `work/` directory, import the sources, and make the design.
-

Warning: Sometimes, a design does not fully follow the VHDL standards. For example it uses the badly engineered `std_logic_unsigned` package. GHDL supports this VHDL dialect through some options: `--ieee=synopsys -fexplicit`. See section ‘*IEEE library pitfalls*’, for more details.

Invoking GHDL

The form of the **ghdl** command is `ghdl command [options...]`. There are multiple available commands, but these general rules apply:

- The first argument selects the command. The options are used to slightly modify the action.
- No option is allowed before the command. Except for the `run` command, no option is allowed after a filename or a unit name.

Hint: If the number of options is large and the command line length is beyond the system limit, you can use a response file. An argument that starts with a `@` is considered as a response file; it is replaced by arguments read from the file (separated by blanks and end of line).

Hint: Only the most common commands and options are shown here. For most advanced and experimental features see section *Command Reference*.

Warning: During analysis and elaboration GHDL may read the `std` and `ieee` files. The location of these files is based on the prefix, which is (in priority order):

- the `--PREFIX` command line option
- the `GHDL_PREFIX` environment variable
- a built-in default path. It is a hard-coded path on GNU/Linux, and it corresponds to the value of the `HKLM\Software\Ghdl\Install_Dir` registry entry on Windows.

You should use the `--disp-config` command to display and debug installation problems.

5.1 Design building commands

The mostly used commands of GHDL are those to analyze and elaborate a design.

5.1.1 Analysis [-a]

-a <[options...] file...>

Analyzes/compiles one or more files, and creates an object file for each source file. Any argument starting with a dash is an option, the others are filenames. No options are allowed after a filename argument. GHDL analyzes each filename in the given order, and stops the analysis in case of error (remaining files are not analyzed).

See GHDL_options, for details on the GHDL options. For example, to produce debugging information such as line numbers, use: `ghdl -a -g my_design.vhdl`.

5.1.2 Elaboration [-e]

-e <[options...] primary_unit [secondary_unit]>

Re-analyzes all the configurations, entities, architectures and package declarations, and creates the default configurations and the default binding indications according to the LRM rules. It also generates the list of objects files required for the executable. Then, it links all these files with the runtime library. The actual elaboration is performed at runtime.

- The elaboration command, **-e**, must be followed by a name of either:
 - a configuration unit
 - an entity unit
 - an entity unit followed by a name of an architecture unit

Name of the units must be a simple name, without any dot. You can select the name of the *WORK* library with the `--work=NAME` option, as described in GHDL_options. See section ‘*Top entity*’, for the restrictions on the root design of a hierarchy.

- If the GCC/LLVM backend was enabled during the compilation of GHDL, the elaboration command creates an executable containing the code of the VHDL sources, the elaboration code and simulation code to execute a design hierarchy. The executable is created in the current directory and the filename is the name of the primary unit, or for the later case, the concatenation of the name of the primary unit, a dash, and the name of the secondary unit (or architecture). Option `-o` followed by a filename can override the default executable filename.
- If mcode is used, this command elaborates the design but does not generate anything. Since the run command also elaborates the design, this can be skipped.

5.1.3 Run [-r]

-r <[options...] primary_unit [secondary_unit] [simulation_options...]>

Runs/simulates a design. The options and arguments are the same as for the elaboration command.

- GGC/LLVM: simply, the filename of the executable is determined and it is executed. Options are ignored. You may also directly execute the program. The executable must be in the current directory.
- mcode: the design is elaborated and the simulation is launched. As a consequence, you must use the same options used during analysis.

This command exists for three reasons:

- You are using GCC/LLVM, but you don’t need to create the executable program name.
- It is coherent with the **-a** and **-e** commands.
- It works with mcode implementation, where the executable code is generated in memory.

See section ‘*Simulation and runtime*’, for details on options.

5.1.4 Elaborate and run `--elab-run`

```
--elab-run <[elab_options...] primary_unit [secondary_unit] [run_options...]>
```

Acts like the elaboration command (see `-e`) followed by the run command (see `-r`).

5.1.5 Check syntax `-s`

```
-s <[options] files>
```

Analyze files but do not generate code. This command may be used to check the syntax of files. It does not update the library.

5.1.6 Analyze and elaborate `-c`

```
-c <[options] file... -<e|r> primary_unit [secondary_unit]>
```

Hint: With GCC/LLVM, `-e` should be used, and `-r` with mcode.

The files are first parsed, and then a elaboration is performed, which drives an analysis. Effectively, analysis and elaboration are combined, but there is no explicit call to `-a`. With GCC/LLVM, code is generated during the elaboration. With mcode, the simulation is launched after the elaboration.

All the units of the files are put into the *work* library. But, the work library is neither read from disk nor saved. Therefore, you must give all the files of the *work* library your design needs.

The advantages over the traditional approach (analyze and then elaborate) are:

- The compilation cycle is achieved in one command.
- Since the files are only parsed once, the compilation cycle may be faster.
- You don't need to know an analysis order.
- This command produces smaller executable, since unused units and subprograms do not generate code.

Hint: However, you should know that currently most of the time is spent in code generation and the analyze and elaborate command generate code for all units needed, even units of `std` and `ieee` libraries. Therefore, according to the design, the time for this command may be higher than the time for the analyze command followed by the elaborate command.

Warning: This command is still under development. In case of problems, you should go back to the traditional way.

5.2 Design rebuilding commands

Analyzing and elaborating a design consisting in several files can be tricky, due to dependencies. GHDL has a few commands to rebuild a design.

5.2.1 Import `-i`

```
-i <[options] file...>
```

All the files specified in the command line are scanned, parsed and added in the libraries but as not yet analyzed. No object files are created. It's purpose is to localize design units in the design files. The make command will then be able to recursively build a hierarchy from an entity name or a configuration name.

Hint:

- Note that all the files are added to the work library. If you have many libraries, you must use the command for each library.
 - Since the files are parsed, there must be correct files. However, since they are not analyzed, many errors are tolerated by this command.
-

See `-m`, to actually build the design.

5.2.2 Make [`-m`]

`-m` <[options] primary [secondary]>

Analyze automatically outdated files and elaborate a design. The primary unit denoted by the `primary` argument must already be known by the system, either because you have already analyzed it (even if you have modified it) or because you have imported it. A file may be outdated because it has been modified (e.g. you just have edited it), or because a design unit contained in the file depends on a unit which is outdated. This rule is of course recursive.

- With option `--bind`, GHDL will stop before the final linking step. This is useful when the main entry point is not GHDL and you're linking GHDL object files into a foreign program.
- With option `-f` (force), GHDL analyzes all the units of the work library needed to create the design hierarchy. Not outdated units are recompiled. This is useful if you want to compile a design hierarchy with new compilation flags (for example, to add the `-g` debugging option).

The make command will only re-analyze design units in the work library. GHDL fails if it has to analyze an outdated unit from another library.

The purpose of this command is to be able to compile a design without prior knowledge of file order. In the VHDL model, some units must be analyzed before others (e.g. an entity before its architecture). It might be a nightmare to analyze a full design of several files, if you don't have the ordered list of file. This command computes an analysis order.

The make command fails when a unit was not previously parsed. For example, if you split a file containing several design units into several files, you must either import these new files or analyze them so that GHDL knows in which file these units are.

The make command imports files which have been modified. Then, a design hierarchy is internally built as if no units are outdated. Then, all outdated design units, using the dependencies of the design hierarchy, are analyzed. If necessary, the design hierarchy is elaborated.

This is not perfect, since the default architecture (the most recently analyzed one) may change while outdated design files are analyzed. In such a case, re-run the make command of GHDL.

5.2.3 Generate Makefile [`--gen-makefile`]

`--gen-makefile` <[options] primary [secondary]>

This command works like the make command (see `-m`), but only a makefile is generated on the standard output.

5.2.4 Generate dependency file command [`--gen-depends`]

`--gen-depends` <[options] primary [secondary]>

Generate a Makefile containing only dependencies to build a design unit.

This command works like the `make` and `gen-makefile` commands (see `-m`), but instead of a full makefile only dependencies without rules are generated on the standard output. These rules can then be integrated in another Makefile.

5.3 Options

Hint: Besides the options described below, *GHDL* passes any debugging options (those that begin with `-g`) and optimizations options (those that begin with `-O` or `-f`) to *GCC*. Refer to the *GCC* manual for details.

`--work<=NAME>`

Specify the name of the `WORK` library. Analyzed units are always placed in the library logically named `WORK`. With this option, you can set its name. By default, the name is `work`.

GHDL checks whether `WORK` is a valid identifier. Although being more or less supported, the `WORK` identifier should not be an extended identifier, since the filesystem may prevent it from correctly working (due to case sensitivity or forbidden characters in filenames).

VHDL rules forbid you to add units to the `std` library. Furthermore, you should not put units in the `ieee` library.

`--workdir<=DIR>`

Specify the directory where the `WORK` library is located. When this option is not present, the `WORK` library is in the current directory. The object files created by the compiler are always placed in the same directory as the `WORK` library.

Use option `-P` to specify where libraries other than `WORK` are placed.

`--std<=STD>`

Specify the standard to use. By default, the standard is `93c`, which means *VHDL*-93 accepting *VHDL*-87 syntax. For details on `STD` values see section '*VHDL standards*'.

`--ieee<=VER>`

Select the *IEEE* library to use. `VER` must be one of:

none Do not supply an *IEEE* library. Any library clause with the *IEEE* identifier will fail, unless you have created by your own a library with the *IEEE* name.

standard Supply an *IEEE* library containing only packages defined by *ieee* standards. Currently, there are the multivalued logic system packages `std_logic_1164` defined by *IEEE* 1164, the synthesis packages `numeric_bit` and `numeric_std` defined by *IEEE* 1076.3, and the *vital* packages `vital_timing` and `vital_primitives`, defined by *IEEE* 1076.4. The version of these packages is defined by the *VHDL* standard used. See section '*VITAL packages*', for more details.

synopsys Supply the former packages and the following additional packages: `std_logic_arith`, `std_logic_signed`, `std_logic_unsigned`, `std_logic_textio`.

These packages were created by some companies, and are popular. However they are not standard packages, and have been placed in the *IEEE* library without the permission from the *ieee*.

mentor Supply the standard packages and the following additional package: `std_logic_arith`. The package is a slight variation of a definitely not standard but widely mis-used package.

To avoid errors, you must use the same *IEEE* library for all units of your design, and during elaboration.

`-P<DIRECTORY>`

Add *DIRECTORY* to the end of the list of directories to be searched for library files. A library is searched in *DIRECTORY* and also in *DIRECTORY/LIB/VV* (where *LIB* is the name of the library and *VV* the *vhdl* standard).

The *WORK* library is always searched in the path specified by the `--workdir` option, or in the current directory if the latter option is not specified.

-fexplicit

When two operators are overloaded, give preference to the explicit declaration. This may be used to avoid the most common pitfall of the `std_logic_arith` package. See section ‘*IEEE library pitfalls*’, for an example.

Warning: This option is not set by default. I don’t think this option is a good feature, because it breaks the encapsulation rule. When set, an operator can be silently overridden in another package. You’d better fix your design and use the `numeric_std` package.

-frelaxed-rules

Within an object declaration, allow to reference the name (which references the hidden declaration). This ignores the error in the following code:

```
package pkg1 is
  type state is (state1, state2, state3);
end pkg1;

use work.pkg1.all;
package pkg2 is
  constant state1 : state := state1;
end pkg2;
```

Some code (such as Xilinx packages) have such constructs, which are valid.

(The scope of the `state1` constant start at the *constant* word. Because the constant `state1` and the enumeration literal `state1` are homograph, the enumeration literal is hidden in the immediate scope of the constant).

This option also relaxes the rules about pure functions. Violations result in warnings instead of errors.

-fpsl

Enable parsing of PSL assertions within comments. See section ‘*PSL implementation*’ for more details.

--no-vital-checks**--vital-checks**

Disable or enable checks of restriction on VITAL units. Checks are enabled by default.

Checks are performed only when a design unit is decorated by a VITAL attribute. The VITAL attributes are `VITAL_Level0` and `VITAL_Level1`, both declared in the `ieee.VITAL_Timing` package.

Currently, VITAL checks are only partially implemented. See section ‘*VHDL restrictions for VITAL*’ for more details.

--PREFIX<=PATH>

Use `PATH` as the prefix path to find commands and pre-installed (`std` and `ieee`) libraries.

-v

Be verbose. For example, for analysis, elaboration and make commands, GHDL displays the commands executed.

5.4 Warnings

Some constructions are not erroneous but dubious. Warnings are diagnostic messages that report such constructions. Some warnings are reported only during analysis, others during elaboration.

Hint: You could disable a warning by using the `--warn-no-XXX` or `-Wno-XX` instead of `--warn-XXX` or `-WXXX`.

--warn-reserved

Emit a warning if an identifier is a reserved word in a later VHDL standard.

--warn-default-binding

During analyze, warns if a component instantiation has neither configuration specification nor default binding. This may be useful if you want to detect during analyze possibly unbound component if you don't use configuration. See section '[VHDL standards](#)' for more details about default binding rules.

--warn-binding

During elaboration, warns if a component instantiation is not bound (and not explicitly left unbound). Also warns if a port of an entity is not bound in a configuration specification or in a component configuration. This warning is enabled by default, since default binding rules are somewhat complex and an unbound component is most often unexpected.

However, warnings are even emitted if a component instantiation is inside a generate statement. As a consequence, if you use the conditional generate statement to select a component according to the implementation, you will certainly get warnings.

--warn-library

Warns if a design unit replaces another design unit with the same name.

--warn-vital-generic

Warns if a generic name of a vital entity is not a vital generic name. This is set by default.

--warn-delayed-checks

Warns for checks that cannot be done during analysis time and are postponed to elaboration time. This is because not all procedure bodies are available during analysis (either because a package body has not yet been analysed or because *GHDL* doesn't read not required package bodies).

These are checks for no wait statement in a procedure called in a sensitized process and checks for pure rules of a function.

--warn-body

Emit a warning if a package body which is not required is analyzed. If a package does not declare a subprogram or a deferred constant, the package does not require a body.

--warn-specs

Emit a warning if an all or others specification does not apply.

--warn-unused

Emit a warning when a subprogram is never used.

--warn-error

When this option is set, warnings are considered as errors.

--warn-nested-comment

Emit a warning if a `/ *` appears within a block comment (vhdl 2008).

--warn-parenthesis

Emit a warning in case of weird use of parenthesis

--warn-runtime-error

Emit a warning in case of runtime error that is detected during analysis.

5.5 Diagnostics Control

-fcolor-diagnostics**-fno-color-diagnostics**

Control whether diagnostic messages are displayed in color. The default is on when the standard output is a terminal.

-fdiagnostics-show-option

-fno-diagnostics-show-option

Control whether the warning option is displayed at the end of warning messages, so that user can easily know how to disable it.

5.6 Library commands

A new library is created implicitly, by compiling entities (packages etc.) into it: `ghdl -a --work=my_custom_lib my_file.vhd`.

A library's source code is usually stored and compiled into its own directory, that you specify with the `--workdir` option: `ghdl -a --work=my_custom_lib --workdir=my_custom_libdir my_custom_lib_srcdir/my_file.vhd`. See also the `-P` command line option.

Furthermore, GHDL provides a few commands which act on a library:

5.6.1 Directory [--dir]

--dir <[options] [libs]>

Displays the content of the design libraries (by default the `work` library). All options are allowed, but only a few are meaningful: `--work`, `--workdir` and `--std`.

5.6.2 Clean [--clean]

--clean <[options]>

Try to remove any object, executable or temporary file it could have created. Source files are not removed. The library is kept.

5.6.3 Remove [--remove]

--remove <[options]>

Do like the clean command but remove the library too. Note that after removing a design library, the files are not known anymore by GHDL.

5.6.4 Copy [--copy]

--copy <--work=name [options]>

Make a local copy of an existing library. This is very useful if you want to add unit to the `ieee` library:

```
ghdl --copy --work=ieee --ieee=synopsys
ghdl -a --work=ieee numeric_unsigned.vhd
```

5.7 VPI build commands

These commands simplify the compile and the link of a user vpi module. They are all wrapper: the arguments are in fact a whole command line that is executed with additional switches. Currently a unix-like compiler (like `cc`, `gcc` or `clang`) is expected: the additional switches use their syntax. The only option is `-v` which displays the command before its execution.

5.7.1 compile [--vpi-compile]

--vpi-compile <command>

Add include path to the command and execute it:

```
ghdl --vpi-compile command
```

This will execute:

```
command -Ixxx/include
```

For example:

```
ghdl --vpi-compile gcc -c vpil.c
```

executes:

```
gcc -c vpil.c -fPIC -Ixxx/include
```

5.7.2 link [--vpi-link]

--vpi-link <command>

Add library path and name to the command and execute it:

```
ghdl --vpi-link command
```

This will execute:

```
command -Lxxx/lib -lghdlvpi
```

For example:

```
ghdl --vpi-link gcc -o vpil.vpi vpil.o
```

executes:

```
gcc -o vpil.vpi vpil.o --shared -Lxxx/lib -lghdlvpi
```

5.7.3 cflags [--vpi-cflags]

--vpi-cflags

Display flags added by *--vpi-compile*.

5.7.4 ldflags [--vpi-ldflags]

--vpi-ldflags

Display flags added by *--vpi-link*.

5.7.5 include dir [--vpi-include-dir]

--vpi-include-dir

Display the include directory added by the compile flags.

5.7.6 library dir [--vpi-library-dir]

--vpi-library-dir

Display the library directory added by the link flags.

5.8 IEEE library pitfalls

When you use options `--ieee=synopsys` or `--ieee=mentor`, the `ieee` library contains non standard packages such as `std_logic_arith`. These packages are not standard because they are not described by an IEEE standard, even if they have been put in the *IEEE* library. Furthermore, they are not really de-facto standard, because there are slight differences between the packages of Mentor and those of Synopsys. Furthermore, since they are not well-thought, their use has pitfalls. For example, this description has error during compilation:

```
library ieee;
use ieee.std_logic_1164.all;

-- A counter from 0 to 10.
entity counter is
  port (val : out std_logic_vector (3 downto 0);
        ck : std_logic;
        rst : std_logic);
end counter;

library ieee;
use ieee.std_logic_unsigned.all;

architecture bad of counter
is
  signal v : std_logic_vector (3 downto 0);
begin
  process (ck, rst)
  begin
    if rst = '1' then
      v <= x"0";
    elsif rising_edge (ck) then
      if v = "1010" then -- Error
        v <= x"0";
      else
        v <= v + 1;
      end if;
    end if;
  end process;

  val <= v;
end bad;
```

When you analyze this design, GHDL does not accept it (too long lines have been split for readability):

```
ghdl -a --ieee=synopsys bad_counter.vhdl
bad_counter.vhdl:13:14: operator "=" is overloaded
bad_counter.vhdl:13:14: possible interpretations are:
../libraries/ieee/std_logic_1164.v93:69:5: implicit function "="
[std_logic_vector, std_logic_vector return boolean]
../libraries/synopsys/std_logic_unsigned.vhdl:64:5: function "="
[std_logic_vector, std_logic_vector return boolean]
../translate/ghdldrv/ghdl: compilation error
```

Indeed, the “=” operator is defined in both packages, and both are visible at the place it is used. The first declaration is an implicit one, which occurs when the `std_logic_vector` type is declared and is an element to element comparison, the second one is an explicit declared function, with the semantic of an unsigned comparison.

With some analyser, the explicit declaration has priority over the implicit declaration, and this design can be analyzed without error. However, this is not the rule given by the VHDL LRM, and since GHDL follows these rules, it emits an error.

You can force GHDL to use this rule with the *-fexplicit* option (see GHDL_options for further details). However it is easy to fix this error, by using a selected name:

```
library ieee;
use ieee.std_logic_unsigned.all;

architecture fixed_bad of counter
is
    signal v : std_logic_vector (3 downto 0);
begin
    process (ck, rst)
    begin
        if rst = '1' then
            v <= x"0";
        elsif rising_edge (ck) then
            if ieee.std_logic_unsigned."=" (v, "1010") then
                v <= x"0";
            else
                v <= v + 1;
            end if;
        end if;
    end process;

    val <= v;
end fixed_bad;
```

It is better to only use the standard packages defined by IEEE, which provides the same functionalities:

```
library ieee;
use ieee.numeric_std.all;

architecture good of counter
is
    signal v : unsigned (3 downto 0);
begin
    process (ck, rst)
    begin
        if rst = '1' then
            v <= x"0";
        elsif rising_edge (ck) then
            if v = "1010" then
                v <= x"0";
            else
                v <= v + 1;
            end if;
        end if;
    end process;

    val <= std_logic_vector (v);
end good;
```

Hint: The *ieee* math packages (*math_real* and *math_complex*) provided with *GHDL* are fully compliant with the *IEEE* standard.

Simulation and runtime

6.1 Simulation options

In most system environments, it is possible to pass options while invoking a program. Contrary to most programming languages, there is no standard method in VHDL to obtain the arguments or to set the exit status.

In GHDL, it is impossible to pass parameters to your design. A later version could do it through the generics interfaces of the top entity.

However, the GHDL runtime behaviour can be modified with some options; for example, it is possible to stop simulation after a certain time.

The exit status of the simulation is `EXIT_SUCCESS` (0) if the simulation completes, or `EXIT_FAILURE` (1) in case of error (assertion failure, overflow or any constraint error).

Here is the list of the most useful options. Some debugging options are also available, but not described here. The `--help` options lists all options available, including the debugging one.

`--assert-level<=LEVEL>`

Select the assertion level at which an assertion violation stops the simulation. *LEVEL* is the name from the *severity_level* enumerated type defined in the *standard* package or the `none` name.

By default, only assertion violation of severity level `failure` stops the simulation.

For example, if *LEVEL* was `warning`, any assertion violation with severity level `warning`, `error` or `failure` would stop simulation, but the assertion violation at the `note` severity level would only display a message.

Option `--assert-level=none` prevents any assertion violation to stop simulation.

`--ieee-asserts<=POLICY>`

Select how the assertions from `ieee` units are handled. *POLICY* can be `enable` (the default), `disable` which disables all assertion from `ieee` packages and `disable-at-0` which disables only at start of simulation.

This option can be useful to avoid assertion message from `ieee.numeric_std` (and other `ieee` packages).

`--stop-time<=TIME>`

Stop the simulation after *TIME*. *TIME* is expressed as a time value, *without* any space. The time is the simulation time, not the real clock time.

For example:

```
$ ./my_design --stop-time=10ns
$ ./my_design --stop-time=ps
```

--stop-delta<=N>

Stop the simulation after *N* delta cycles in the same current time.

--disp-time

Display the time and delta cycle number as simulation advances.

--unbuffered

Disable buffering on stdout, stderr and files opened in write or append mode (TEXTIO).

--sdf<=PATH=FILENAME>

Do VITAL annotation on *PATH* with SDF file *FILENAME*.

PATH is a path of instances, separated with `.` or `/`. Any separator can be used. Instances are component instantiation labels, generate labels or block labels. Currently, you cannot use an indexed name.

Specifying a delay:

```
--sdf=min=PATH=FILENAME
--sdf=typ=PATH=FILENAME
--sdf=max=PATH=FILENAME
```

If the option contains a type of delay, that is `min=`, `typ=` or `max=`, the annotator use respectively minimum, typical or maximum values. If the option does not contain a type of delay, the annotator use the typical delay.

See section ‘[Backannotation](#)’, for more details.

--vpi<=FILENAME>

Load VPI module.

--vpi-trace<=FILE>

Trace vpi calls to *FILE*.

--help

Display a short description of the options accepted by the runtime library.

6.2 Export waveforms

--read-wave-opt=<FILENAME>

Filter signals to be dumped to the wave file according to the wave option file provided.

Here is a description of the wave option file format currently supported

```
$ version = 1.1 # Optional

# Path format for signals in packages :
my_pkg.global_signal_a

# Path format for signals in entities :
/top/sub/clk

# Dumps every signals named reset in first level sub entities of top
/top/*/reset

# Dumps every signals named reset in recursive sub entities of top
/top/**/reset

# Dump every signals of sub2 which could be anywhere in design except on
# top level
```

```

/**/sub2/*

# Dump every signals of sub3 which must be a first level sub entity of the
# top level
/**/sub3/*

# Dump every signals of the first level sub entities of sub3 (but not
# those of sub3)
/**/sub3/*/*

```

--write-wave-opt=<FILENAME>

If the wave option file doesn't exist, creates it with all the signals of the design. Otherwise throws an error, because it won't erase an existing file.

--vcd<=FILENAME>

--vcdgz<=FILENAME>

Option **--vcd** dumps into the VCD file *FILENAME* the signal values before each non-delta cycle. If *FILENAME* is **-**, then the standard output is used, otherwise a file is created or overwritten.

The **--vcdgz** option is the same as the **--vcd** option, but the output is compressed using the *zlib* (*gzip* compression). However, you can't use the **-** filename. Furthermore, only one VCD file can be written.

VCD (value change dump) is a file format defined by the *verilog* standard and used by virtually any wave viewer.

Since it comes from *verilog*, only a few VHDL types can be dumped. GHDL dumps only signals whose base type is of the following:

- types defined in the `std.standard` package:
- `bit`
- `bit_vector`
- types defined in the `ieee.std_logic_1164` package:
- `std_ulogic`
- `std_logic` (because it is a subtype of `std_ulogic`)
- `std_ulogic_vector`
- `std_logic_vector`
- any integer type

I have successfully used *gtkwave* to view VCD files.

Currently, there is no way to select signals to be dumped: all signals are dumped, which can generate big files.

It is very unfortunate there is no standard or well-known wave file format supporting VHDL types. If you are aware of such a free format, please mail me ([Reporting bugs](#)).

--vcd-nodate

Do not write date in VCD file

--fst<=FILENAME>

Write the waveforms into a *fst*, that can be displayed by *gtkwave*. The *fst* files are much smaller than VCD or *GHW* files, but it handles only the same signals as the VCD format.

--wave<=FILENAME>

Write the waveforms into a *ghw* (GHdl Waveform) file. Currently, all the signals are dumped into the waveform file, you cannot select a hierarchy of signals to be dumped.

The format of this file was defined by myself and is not yet completely fixed. It may change slightly. The *gtkwave* tool can read the *GHW* files.

Contrary to VCD files, any VHDL type can be dumped into a GHW file.

6.3 Export hierarchy and references

--disp-tree<[=KIND]>

Display the design hierarchy as a tree of instantiated design entities. This may be useful to understand the structure of a complex design. *KIND* is optional, but if set must be one of:

- none Do not display hierarchy. Same as if the option was not present.
- inst Display entities, architectures, instances, blocks and generates statements.
- proc Like `inst` but also display processes.
- port Like `proc` but display ports and signals too. If *KIND* is not specified, the hierarchy is displayed with the `port` mode.

--no-run

Stop the simulation before the first cycle. This may be used with `--disp-tree` to display the tree without simulating the whole design. This option actually elaborates the design, so it will catch any bound error in port maps.

--xref-html <[options] file...>

To easily navigate through your sources, you may generate cross-references. This command generates an html file for each `file` given in the command line, with syntax highlighting and full cross-reference: every identifier is a link to its declaration. Besides, an index of the files is created too.

The set of `file` are analyzed, and then, if the analysis is successful, html files are generated in the directory specified by the `-o` option, or `html/` directory by default.

- If the option `--format=html2` is specified, then the generated html files follow the HTML 2.0 standard, and colours are specified with `` tags. However, colours are hard-coded.
- If the option `--format=css` is specified, then the generated html files follow the HTML 4.0 standard, and use the CSS-1 file `ghdl.css` to specify colours. This file is generated only if it does not already exist (it is never overwritten) and can be customized by the user to change colours or appearance. Refer to a generated file and its comments for more information.

--psl-report<=FILENAME>

Write a report for PSL at the end of simulation. For each PSL cover and assert statements, the name, source location and whether it passed or failed is reported. The file is written using the JSON format, but still being human readable.

--file-to-xml

Outputs an XML representation of the decorated syntax tree for the input file and its dependencies. It can be used for VHDL tooling using semantic information, like style checkers, documentation extraction, complexity estimation...

Warning:

- The AST slightly changes from time to time (particularly when new nodes are added for new language features), so be liberal in what is allowed by your tool. Also, the XML can be quite large so consider it only during prototyping.
- Note that at this time there is no XML dump of the elaborated design.

6.4 Debugging

--trace-signals

Display signals after each cycle.

--trace-processes

Display process name before each cycle.

--stats

Display run-time statistics.

--disp-order

Display signals order.

--disp-sources

Display sources while displaying signals.

--disp-sig-types

Display signal types.

--disp-signals-map

Display map bw declared signals and internal signals.

--disp-signals-table

Display internal signals.

--checks

Do internal checks after each process run.

--activity<=LEVEL>

Watch activity of LEVEL signals: LEVEL is all, min (default) or none (unsafe).

--dump-rti

Dump Run Time Information (RTI).

--bootstrap

Allow `--work=std`

6.4.1 GNU Debugger (GDB)

Warning: Debugging VHDL programs using *GDB* is possible only with GCC/LLVM.

GDB is a general purpose debugger for programs compiled by GCC. Currently, there is no VHDL support for GDB. It may be difficult to inspect variables or signals in GDB. However, it is still able to display the stack frame in case of error or to set a breakpoint at a specified line.

GDB can be useful to precisely catch a runtime error, such as indexing an array beyond its bounds. All error check subprograms call the `__ghdl_fatal` procedure. Therefore, to catch runtime error, set a breakpoint like this:

```
(gdb) break __ghdl_fatal
```

When the breakpoint is hit, use the `where` or `bt` command to display the stack frames.

Part II

Getting GHDL

Releases and sources

Contents of this Page

- *Downloading pre-built packages*
- *Downloading Source Files*
 - *Downloading from GitHub*
 - *Downloading via `git clone`*
 - * *On Linux*
 - * *On OS X*
 - * *On Windows*

7.1 Downloading pre-built packages

OS	Backend	Filesize	Downloads
Debian 9 (Stretch) GPL	mcode	2.61 MB	
Debian 9 (Stretch)	mcode	2.93 MB	
Ubuntu 14 (Trusty)	mcode	3.15 MB	
Ubuntu 14 (Trusty)	LLVM	14.11MB	
Fedora 26	mcode	2.83 MB	
Windows x86 (MinGW32)	mcode	3.05 MB	
Windows x86 (MinGW64)	LLVM	12.7 MB	
Mac OS X	mcode	2.26 MB	
Sum:			

7.2 Downloading Source Files

7.2.1 Downloading from GitHub

GHDL can be downloaded as a zip-file from GitHub. See the following table, to choose your desired git branch.

7.2.2 Downloading via `git clone`

GHDL can be downloaded (cloned) with `git clone` from GitHub. GitHub offers the transfer protocols HTTPS and SSH. You should use SSH if you have a GitHub account and have already uploaded an OpenSSH public key to GitHub, otherwise use HTTPS if you have no account or you want to use login credentials.

The created folder `<GitRoot>\ghdl` is used as `<GHDLRoot>` in later instructions or on other pages in this documentation.

On Linux

Command line instructions to clone GHDL onto a Linux machine with HTTPS protocol:

```
cd GitRoot
git clone "https://github.com/ghdl/ghdl.git" ghdl
cd ghdl
git remote rename origin github
```

Command line instructions to clone GHDL onto a Linux machine machine with SSH protocol:

```
cd GitRoot
git clone "ssh://git@github.com:ghdl/ghdl.git" ghdl
cd ghdl
git remote rename origin github
```

On OS X

Please see the Linux instructions.

On Windows

Note: All Windows command line instructions are intended for **Windows PowerShell**, if not marked otherwise. So executing the following instructions in Windows Command Prompt (`cmd.exe`) won't function or result in errors! See the Requirements section on where to download or update PowerShell.

Command line instructions to clone GHDL onto a Windows machine with HTTPS protocol:

```
cd GitRoot
git clone "https://github.com/ghdl/ghdl.git" ghdl
cd ghdl
git remote rename origin github
```

Command line instructions to clone GHDL onto a Windows machine with SSH protocol:

```
cd GitRoot
git clone "ssh://git@github.com:ghdl/ghdl.git" ghdl
cd ghdl
git remote rename origin github
```

Building GHDL from Sources

Download

GHDL can be downloaded as a [zip-file](#) (latest 'master' branch) or cloned with `git clone` from GitHub. GitHub offers HTTPS and SSH as transfer protocols. See the [Downloading Source Files](#) page for further details. The installation directory is referred to as `GHDLRoot`.

Available back-ends

GHDL currently supports three different back-ends (code generators):

- `mcode` - built-in x86(or x86_64) code generator,
- [GCC - Gnu Compiler Collection](#), and
- [LLVM - Low-Level Virtual Machine](#) .

Here is a short comparison, so that you can choose the one you want to use:

Back-end	Pros	Cons
<i>mcode</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very easy to build• Very quick analysis• Can handle very large designs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simulation is slower• x86_64/i386 only
<i>LLVM</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generated code is faster• Generated code can be debugged (with <code>-g</code>)• Easier to build than GCC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build is more complex
<i>GCC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generated code is faster (particularly with <code>-O</code> or <code>-O2</code>)• Generated code can be debugged (with <code>-g</code>)• Ported to many platforms (x86, x86_64, PowerPC, SPARC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build is even more complex• Analysis can take time (particularly for large units)• Code coverage collection (<code>gcov</code>) is unique to GCC

8.1 Directory Structure

- `src`: sources of GHDL, all of them in Ada.
- `libraries`: mostly third party libraries such as, *ieee*, *mentor*, *std*, *synopsys* and *vital*. Except a few shell and *Python* scripts, all the content is written in VHDL.
 - Vendors like Altera, Lattice and Xilinx have their own simulation libraries, especially for FPGA primitives, soft and hard macros. These libraries can not be shipped with GHDL, but we offer prepared compile scripts to pre-compile the vendor libraries, if the vendor tool is present on the computer. These are located in `libraries/vendor`. See *Precompile Vendor Primitives* for information on how to use them.
- `dist`: scripts and auxiliar files to build GHDL in different environments:
 - `gcc`: header and configuration files to build GHDL with GCC (all the platforms).
 - `linux`: build and test script written in shell, and other auxiliary files used to i) launch docker containers and ii) automate multiple builds in *Travis CI*.
 - `windows`:
 - * `mcode`:
 - * `appveyor`:
- `doc`: *Markdown* and *reStructuredText* sources and auxiliary files to build the documentation with *Sphinx*. Indeed, *Read the docs* (RTD) is used to automatically build and deploy this site and/or PDF you are reading.
- `testsuite`: see section `test_suites`.
- `.yml` configuration files for CI environments (`readthedocs`, `travis` and `appveyor`) and *ignore* files for source control management tools (`git` and `.hg`).
- Files for building GHDL: `configure` and `Makefile.in`.
- Auxiliar files for development: `.gdbinit` and `ghdl.gpr.in` (GNAT project file).
- Text files: `COPYING.md`, `NEWS.md` and `README.md`.

8.2 mcode Backend

The mcode backend is available for all supported platforms and is also the most simplest procedure, because it requires the least dependencies and configuration options.

Requirements

- GCC (Gnu Compiler Collection)
- GNAT (Ada compiler for GCC)

Supported platforms

- *mcode Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT*
- *mcode Backend on Windows with GNAT GPL*
- *mcode Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)*

8.2.1 mcode Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT

On Linux, GHDL is configured by `configure` and build by `make`.

- First, GHDL needs to be configured. It is common to specify a `PREFIX` (installation directory like `/usr/local` or `/opt/ghdl`). Without any other option, `configure` select *mcode* as backend.
- Next, `make` starts the compilation process.
- Finally, `make install` installs GHDL into the installation directory specified by `PREFIX`. You may need super user privileges (`sudo ...`).

Example:

```
$ cd <ghdl>
$ mkdir build
$ cd build
$ ../configure --prefix=PREFIX
$ make
$ make install
```

8.2.2 mcode Backend on Windows with GNAT GPL

Requirements

- GNAT GPL from <http://libre.adacore.com>
- PowerShell 4
- PowerShell Community Extensions (PSCX)

Scripts and Parameters

compile.ps1

Commands	Description

-Help	Display the integrated help pages
-Clean	Clean up all files and directories
-Compile	Compile GHDL
-Install	Install all files into a directory (xcopy deployment)
-Uninstall	Uninstall all files from a directory
-Update	Update files in the installation directory
-CreatePackage	create an installer package
Install options:	
-InstallPath	Installation directory
CreatePackage options:	
-Zip	Create a zip-file for xcopy deployment

8.2.3 mcode Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)

On Windows with MinGW, GHDL is configured by `configure` and build by `make`.

- First, GHDL needs to be configured. It is common to specify a `PREFIX` (installation directory like `/usr/local` or `/opt/ghdl`). Without any other option, `configure` select *mcode* as backend.
- Next, `make` starts the compilation process.
- Finally, `make install` installs GHDL into the installation directory specified by `PREFIX`.

Example:

```
$ cd <ghdl>
$ mkdir build
$ cd build
$ ../configure --prefix=PREFIX
$ make
$ make install
```

8.3 LLVM Backend

Requirements

- GCC (Gnu Compiler Collection)
- GNAT (Ada compiler for GCC)
- LLVM (Low-Level-Virtual Machine) and CLANG (Compiler front-end for LLVM)
 - 3.5
 - 3.8
 - 3.9
 - 4.0
 - 5.0

Supported platforms

- *LLVM Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT*
- *LLVM Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)*
- Mac OS

8.3.1 LLVM Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT

Hint: You need to install LLVM (usually depends on `libedit`, see [#29](#)). The supported versions are 3.5 till 5.0, but debugging is only supported with LLVM 3.5.

- First configure GHDL with the proper arg `./configure --with-llvm-config`. If `llvm-config` is not in your path, you can specify it: `./configure --with-llvm-config=LLVM_INSTALL/bin/llvm-config`.
- Then, build with `make` and install with `make install`.

Example:

```
$ cd <ghdl>
$ mkdir build
$ cd build
$ ../configure --with-llvm-config --prefix=PREFIX
$ make
$ make install
```

Hint: If you want to have stack backtraces on errors (like assert failure or index of out bounds), you need to configure and build `libbacktrace` from GCC (you don't need to configure GCC). Then add the following arg to configure: `--with-backtrace-lib=/path-to-gcc-build/libbacktrace/.libs/libbacktrace.a`

8.3.2 LLVM Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)

On Windows with MinGW, GHDL is configured by `configure` and build by `make`.

- First, GHDL needs to be configured. It is common to specify a `PREFIX` (installation directory like `/usr/local` or `/opt/ghdl`). Without any other option, configure select *mcode* as backend.
- Next, `make` starts the compilation process.
- Finally, `make install` installs GHDL into the installation directory specified by `PREFIX`.

Example:

```
$ cd <ghdl>
$ mkdir build
$ cd build
$ ../configure --prefix=PREFIX
$ make
$ make install
```

8.4 GCC Backend

Requirements

- GCC (Gnu Compiler Collection)
- GNAT (Ada compiler for GCC)
- GCC source files. Download and untar the sources of version 4.9.x, 5.x, 6.x or 7.x

Supported platforms

- *GCC Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT*
- *GCC Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)*

Hint: Once GCC (with GHDL) has been built once, it is possible to work on the GHDL source tree without copying it in the GCC tree. Commands are:

```
$ make ghdl1-gcc      # Build the compiler
$ make ghdl_gcc       # Build the driver
$ make libs.vhdl.local_gcc # Compile the vhdl libraries
$ make grt-all        # Build the GHDL runtime
$ make install.vpi.local # Locally install vpi files
```

In `src/ortho/gcc`, create a `Makefile.conf` file that sets the following variables:

```
AGCC_GCCSRC_DIR=/path/to/gcc/sources
AGCC_GCCOBJ_DIR=/path/to/gcc/build
```

Hint: For ppc64 (and AIX ?) platform, the object file format contains an identifier for the source language. Because gcc doesn't know about the VHDL, gcc crashes very early. This could be fixed with a very simple change in `gcc/config/rs6000/rs6000.c`, function `rs6000_output_function_epilogue` (as of gcc 4.8):

```
else if (! strcmp (language_string, "GNU Objective-C"))
    i = 14;
else
-   gcc_unreachable ();
+   i = 0;
fprintf (file, "%d", i);

/* 8 single bit fields: global linkage (not set for C extern linkage),
```

8.4.1 GCC Backend on GNU/Linux with GCC/GNAT

Hint: There are some dependencies for building GCC (gmp, mpfr and mpc). If you have not them installed on your system, you can either build them manually or use the `download_prerequisites` script provided in the GCC source tree (recommended): `cd /path/to/gcc/source/dir && ./contrib/download_prerequisites`.

- First configure GHDL, specify GCC source directory and installation prefix (like `/usr/local` or `/opt/ghdl`).

- Next, invoke `make copy-sources` to copy GHDL sources in the source directory.
- Then, configure GCC. The list of `--disable` configure options can be adjusted to your needs. GHDL does not require all these optional libraries and disabling them will speed-up the build.
- Now, build and install GCC with `make`.
- Last, build and install GHDL libraries.

Example:

```
$ cd <ghdl>
$ mkdir build
$ cd build
$ ../configure --with-gcc=/path/to/gcc/source/dir --prefix=/usr/local
$ make copy-sources
$ mkdir gcc-objs; cd gcc-objs
$ /path/to/gcc/source/dir/configure --prefix=/usr/local --enable-languages=c,vhdl \
--disable-bootstrap --disable-lto --disable-multilib --disable-libssp \
--disable-libgomp --disable-libquadmath
$ make -j2 && make install
$ cd /path/to/ghdl/source/dir
$ make ghdl-lib
$ make install
```

Hint: Note that the prefix directory to configure `gcc` must be the same as the one used to configure GHDL. If you have manually built `gmp/mpfr/mpc` (without using the script in `contrib`) and if you have installed them in a non-standard directory, you may need to add `--with-gmp=GMP_INSTALL_DIR`.

Hint: If your system `gcc` was configured with `--enable-default-pie` (check if that option appears in the output of `gcc -v`), you should also add it.

Hint: If you don't want to install `makeinfo`, do `make install MAKEINFO=true` instead.

8.4.2 GCC Backend on Windows with GCC/GNAT (MinGW)

Todo: Under investigation on how to build that beast.

Hint: The output of both GCC and LLVM is an executable file, but *mcode* does not generate any. Therefore, if using GCC/LLVM, the call with argument `-r` can be replaced with direct execution of the binary. See section *Quick Start Guide*.

After making your choice, you can jump to the corresponding section. However, we suggest you to read *Directory Structure* before, so that you know where the content is placed and which temporal files are expected to be created.

Hint: Since GHDL is written in *Ada*, independently of the code generator you use, the *GNU Ada compiler, GNAT GPL*, is required, 2014 (or later) for x86 (32 or 64 bits). *GNAT GPL* can be downloaded anonymously from

libre.adacore.com. Then, untar and run the doinstall script. Alternatively, most GNU/Linux provide a package named `gcc-ada` or `gcc-gnat`.

Hint: In these instructions, the configure script is executed in the source directory; but you can execute in a different directory too, like this:

```
$ mkdir ghdl-objs
$ cd ghdl-objs
$ ../path/to/ghdl/configure ...
```

Precompile Vendor Primitives

Vendors like Altera, Lattice and Xilinx have their own simulation libraries, especially for FPGA primitives, soft and hard macros. These libraries can not be shipped with *GHDL*, but we offer prepared compile scripts to pre-compile the vendor libraries, if the vendor tool is present on the computer. There are also popular simulation and verification libraries like OSVVM¹, VUnit² or UVVM³, which can be pre-compiled, too.

The compilation scripts are written in the shell languages: *PowerShell* for *Windows*™ and *Bash* for *GNU/Linux*. The compile scripts can colorize the GHDL warning and error lines with the help of *grc/grcat*⁴.

9.1 Supported Vendors Libraries

- Altera/Intel Quartus (13.0 or later):
 - *lpm*, *sgate*
 - *altera*, *altera_mf*, *altera_Insim*
 - *arriaii*, *arriaii_pcie_hip*, *arriaiigz*
 - *arriav*, *arriavgz*, *arriavgz_pcie_hip*
 - *cycloneiv*, *cycloneiv_pcie_hip*, *cycloneive*
 - *cyclonev*
 - *max*, *maxii*, *maxv*
 - *stratixiv*, *stratixiv_pcie_hip*
 - *stratixv*, *stratixv_pcie_hip*
 - *fiftyfivenm*, *twentynm*
- Lattice (3.6 or later):
 - *ec*
 - *ecp*, *ecp2*, *ecp3*, *ecp5u*

¹ OSVVM <http://github.com/OSVVM/OSVVM>

² VUnit <https://github.com/VUnit/vunit>

³ UVVM https://github.com/UVVM/UVVM_All

⁴ Generic Colourizer <http://kassiopeia.juls.savba.sk/~garabik/software/grc.html>

- *lptm*, *lptm2*
- *machxo*, *machxo2*, *machxo3l*
- *sc*, *scm*
- *xp*, *xp2*
- Xilinx ISE (14.0 or later):
 - *unisim* (incl. *secureip*)
 - *unimacro*
 - *simprim* (incl. *secureip*)
 - *xilinxcorelib*
- Xilinx Vivado (2014.1 or later):
 - *unisim* (incl. *secureip*)
 - *unimacro*

9.2 Supported Simulation and Verification Libraries

- OSVVM (for VHDL-2008)
 - *osvvm*
 - VUnit (for VHDL-2008)
 - *vunit_lib*
 - UVVM (for VHDL-2008)
 -
-

9.3 Script Configuration

The vendor library compile scripts need to know where the used / latest vendor tool chain is installed. Therefore, the script implement a default installation directory search as well as environment variable checks. If a vendor tool could not be detected or the script choses the wrong vendor library source directory, then it's possible to provide the path via *–source* or *-Source*.

The generated output is stored relative to the current working directory. The scripts create a sub-directory for each vendor. The default output directory can be overwritten by the parameter *–output* or *-Output*.

To compile all source files with GHDL, the simulator executable is searched in *PATH*. The found default GHDL executable can be overwritten by setting the environment variable *GHDL* or by passing the parameter *–ghdl* or *-GHDL* to the scripts.

If the vendor library compilation is used very often, we recommend to configure these parameters in *config.sh* or *config.psm1*, so the command line can be shortened to the essential parts.

9.4 Compiling on Linux

- **Step 0 - Configure the scripts (optional)** See next section for how to configure *config.sh*.
- **Step 1 - Browse to your simulation working directory**

```
$ cd <MySimulationFolder>
...
```

- **Step 2 - Start the compilation script(s)**

```
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-altera.sh --all
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-lattice.sh --all
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-xilinx-ise.sh --all
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-xilinx-vivado.sh --all
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-osvvm.sh --all
$ /usr/local/lib/ghdl/vendors/compile-vunit.sh --all
...
```

In most cases GHDL is installed into `/usr/local/`. The scripts are installed into the `lib` directory.

- **Step 3 - Viewing the result** This creates vendor directories in your current working directory and compiles the vendor files into them.

```
$ ls -ahl
...
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:41 altera
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:42 lattice
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:48 osvvm
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:58 vunit
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:58 xilinx-ise
drwxr-xr-x  2 <user> <group> 56K Nov 30 17:48 xilinx-vivado
...
```

9.5 Compiling on Windows

- **Step 0 - Configure the scripts (optional)**
See next section for how to configure *config.psm1*.
- **Step 1 - Browse to your simulation working directory**

```
PS> cd <MySimulationFolder>
```

- **Step 2 - Start the compilation script(s)**

```
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-altera.ps1 -All
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-lattice.ps1 -All
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-xilinx-ise.ps1 -All
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-xilinx-vivado.ps1 -All
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-osvvm.ps1 -All
PS> <GHDL>\libraries\vendors\compile-vunit.ps1 -All
```

- **Step 3 - Viewing the result** This creates vendor directories in your current working directory and compiles the vendor files into them.

```
PS> dir
    Directory: D:\temp\ghdl

Mode                LastWriteTime         Length Name
----                -
d----          20.11.2015         19:33      <DIR> altera
d----          20.11.2015         19:38      <DIR> lattice
d----          20.11.2015         19:38      <DIR> osvvm
d----          20.11.2015         19:45      <DIR> vunit_lib
d----          20.11.2015         19:06      <DIR> xilinx-ise
d----          20.11.2015         19:40      <DIR> xilinx-vivado
```

9.6 Configuration Files

9.6.1 For Linux: *config.sh*

Please open the *config.sh* file and set the dictionary entries for the installed vendor tools to the appropriate directory to your tool's installation directories. Use an empty string "" for not installed tools.

config.sh:

```
declare -A InstallationDirectory
InstallationDirectory[AlteraQuartus]="/opt/Altera/16.0"
InstallationDirectory[LatticeDiamond]="/opt/Diamond/3.8_x64"
InstallationDirectory[OSVVM]="/home/<user>/git/GitHub/osvvm"
InstallationDirectory[VUnit]="/home/<user>/git/GitHub/vunit"
InstallationDirectory[XilinxISE]="/opt/Xilinx/14.7"
InstallationDirectory[XilinxVivado]="/opt/Xilinx/Vivado/2016.3"
```

9.6.2 For Windows: *config.psm1*

Please open the *config.psm1* file and set the dictionary entries for the installed vendor tools to the appropriate directory to your tool's installation folder. Use an empty string "" for not installed tools.

config.psm1:

```
$InstallationDirectory = @{
    "AlteraQuartus" = "C:\Altera\16.0";
    "LatticeDiamond" = "C:\Lattice\Diamond\3.8_x64";
    "XilinxISE" = "C:\Xilinx\14.7\ISE_DS";
    "XilinxVivado" = "C:\Xilinx\Vivado\2016.3";
    "OSVVM" = "D:\git\GitHub\osvvm";
    "VUnit" = "D:\git\GitHub\vunit"
}
```

9.6.3 Selectable Options for the Bash Scripts:

First I should translate the scripts before writing the docu...

- Common parameters to most scripts:

-h --help	Print the embedded help page(s).
-c --clean	Cleanup directory before analyzing.
-n --no-warnings	Don't show warnings. Report errors only.
-s --skip-existing	Skip already compiled files (an *.o file exists).

```
-S --skip-largefiles  Don't compile large entities like DSP and PCIe primitives.
-H --halt-on-error    Stop compiling if an error occurred.
```

- *compile-altera.sh*

Selectable libraries:

```
-a --all          Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
--altera         Compile base libraries like 'altera' and 'altera_mf'
--max            Compile device libraries for Max CPLDs
--arria          Compile device libraries for Arria FPGAs
--cyclone        Compile device libraries for Cyclone FPGAs
--stratix        Compile device libraries for Stratix FPGAs
```

Compile options:

```
.. code-block:: raw
```

```
--vhd193         Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
--vhd12008       Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.
```

- *compile-xilinx-ise.sh*

Selectable libraries:

```
-a --all          Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
--unisim         Compile the unisim primitives
--unimacro       Compile the unimacro macros
--simprim        Compile the simprim primitives
--corelib        Compile the xilinxcorelib macros
--secureip       Compile the secureip primitives
```

Compile options:

```
--vhd193         Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
--vhd12008       Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.
```

- *compile-xilinx-vivado.sh*

Selectable libraries:

```
-a --all          Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
--unisim         Compile the unisim primitives
--unimacro       Compile the unimacro macros
--secureip       Compile the secureip primitives
```

Compile options:

```
--vhd193         Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
--vhd12008       Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.
```

- *compile-osvvm.sh*

Selectable libraries:

```
-a --all          Compile all.
--osvvm          Compile the OSVVM library.
```

- *compile-vunit.sh*

Selectable libraries:

<code>-a --all</code>	Compile all.
<code>--osvvm</code>	Compile the VUnit library.

- *compile-uvvm.sh*

Selectable libraries:

<code>-a --all</code>	Compile all.
<code>--uvvm</code>	Compile the VUnit library.

9.6.4 Selectable Options for the PowerShell Scripts:

- Common parameters to all scripts:

<code>-Help</code>	Print the embedded help page(s).
<code>-Clean</code>	Cleanup directory before analyzing.
<code>-SuppressWarnings</code>	Don't show warnings. Report errors only.

- *compile-altera.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

<code>-All</code>	Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
<code>-Altera</code>	Compile base libraries like 'altera' and 'altera_mf'
<code>-Max</code>	Compile device libraries for Max CPLDs
<code>-Arria</code>	Compile device libraries for Arria FPGAs
<code>-Cyclone</code>	Compile device libraries for Cyclone FPGAs
<code>-Stratix</code>	Compile device libraries for Stratix FPGAs

Compile options:

<code>-VHDL93</code>	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
<code>-VHDL2008</code>	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.

- *compile-xilinx-ise.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

<code>-All</code>	Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
<code>-Unisim</code>	Compile the unisim primitives
<code>-Unimacro</code>	Compile the unimacro macros
<code>-Simprim</code>	Compile the simprim primitives
<code>-CoreLib</code>	Compile the xilinxcorelib macros
<code>-Secureip</code>	Compile the secureip primitives

Compile options:

<code>-VHDL93</code>	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
<code>-VHDL2008</code>	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.

- *compile-xilinx-vivado.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

<code>-All</code>	Compile all libraries, including common libraries, packages and device
<code>-Unisim</code>	Compile the unisim primitives
<code>-Unimacro</code>	Compile the unimacro macros
<code>-Secureip</code>	Compile the secureip primitives

Compile options:

-VHDL93	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-93 (default).
-VHDL2008	Compile selected libraries with VHDL-2008.

- *compile-osvvm.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

-All	Compile all.
-OSVVM	Compile the OSVVM library.

- *compile-vunit.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

-All	Compile all.
-VUnit	Compile the VUnit library.

- *compile-uvvm.ps1*

Selectable libraries:

-All	Compile all.
-UVVM	Compile the UVVM libraries.

Part III

References

Command Reference

Hint: The most common commands and options are shown in section *Invoking GHDL*. Here the advanced and experimental features are described.

10.1 Environment variables

GHDL_PREFIX

10.2 Misc commands

There are a few GHDL commands which are seldom useful.

10.2.1 Help [-h]

--help, -h

Display (on the standard output) a short description of all the commands available. If the help switch is followed by a command switch, then options for this later command are displayed:

```
ghdl --help
ghdl -h
ghdl -h command
```

10.2.2 Display config [--disp-config]

--disp-config <[options]>

Display the program paths and options used by GHDL. This may be useful to track installation errors.

10.2.3 Display standard [--disp-standard]

--disp-standard <[options]>

Display the `std.standard` package.

10.2.4 Version [--version]

--version, -v

Display the GHDL version and exit.

10.3 File commands

The following commands act on one or several files. These are not analyzed, therefore, they work even if a file has semantic errors.

10.3.1 Pretty print [--pp-html]

--pp-html <[options] file...>

The files are just scanned and an html file, with syntax highlighting is generated on standard output. Since the files are not even parsed, erroneous files or incomplete designs can be pretty printed.

The style of the html file can be modified with the `--format=` option:

- By default or when the `--format=html2` option is specified, the output is an HTML 2.0 file, with colours set through `` tags.
- When the `--format=css` option is specified, the output is an HTML 4.0 file, with colours set through a CSS file, whose name is `ghdl.css`. See `Cross-reference_command`, for more details about this CSS file.

10.3.2 Find [-f]

-f <file...>

The files are scanned, parsed and the names of design units are displayed. Design units marked with two stars are candidate to be at the apex of a design hierarchy.

10.3.3 Chop [--chop]

--chop <files...>

The provided files are read, and a file is written in the current directory for every design unit. Each filename is build according to the type:

- For an entity declaration, a package declaration or a configuration the file name is `NAME.vhdl`, where `NAME` is the name of the design unit.
- For a package body, the filename is `NAME-body.vhdl`.
- Finally, for an architecture `ARCH` of an entity `ENTITY`, the filename is `ENTITY-ARCH.vhdl`.

Since the input files are parsed, this command aborts in case of syntax error. The command aborts too if a file to be written already exists.

Comments between design units are stored into the most adequate files.

This command may be useful to split big files, if your computer has not enough memory to compile such files. The size of the executable is reduced too.

10.3.4 Lines [--lines]

--lines <files...>

Display on the standard output lines of files preceded by line number.

10.4 GCC/LLVM only commands

10.4.1 Bind [--bind]

--bind <[options] primary_unit [secondary_unit]>

Performs only the first stage of the elaboration command; the list of objects files is created but the executable is not built. This command should be used only when the main entry point is not GHDL.

10.4.2 Link [--link]

--link <[options] primary_unit [secondary_unit]>

Performs only the second stage of the elaboration command: the executable is created by linking the files of the object files list. This command is available only for completeness. The elaboration command is equivalent to the bind command followed by the link command.

10.4.3 List link [--list-link]

--list-link <primary_unit [secondary_unit]>

This command may be used only after a bind command. GHDL displays all the files which will be linked to create an executable. This command is intended to add object files in a link of a foreign program.

10.5 Options

--mb-comments, -C

Allow multi-bytes chars in a comment

--syn-binding

Use synthesizer rules for component binding. During elaboration, if a component is not bound to an entity using VHDL LRM rules, try to find in any known library an entity whose name is the same as the component name.

This rule is known as synthesizer rule.

There are two key points: normal VHDL LRM rules are tried first and entities are searched only in known library. A known library is a library which has been named in your design.

This option is only useful during elaboration.

--GHDL1<=COMMAND>

Use COMMAND as the command name for the compiler. If COMMAND is not a path, then it is searched in the path.

--AS<=COMMAND>

Use COMMAND as the command name for the assembler. If COMMAND is not a path, then it is searched in the path. The default is as.

--LINK<=COMMAND>

Use COMMAND as the linker driver. If COMMAND is not a path, then it is searched in the path. The default is gcc.

10.6 Passing options to other programs

Warning: These options are only available with GCC/LLVM.

For many commands, GHDL acts as a driver: it invokes programs to perform the command. You can pass arbitrary options to these programs.

Both the compiler and the linker are in fact GCC programs. See the GCC manual for details on GCC options.

-Wc, <OPTION>

Pass *OPTION* as an option to the compiler.

-Wa, <OPTION>

Pass *OPTION* as an option to the assembler.

-Wl, <OPTION>

Pass *OPTION* as an option to the linker.

CHAPTER 11

Coding Style

Ada subset: use only a simple (VHDL like) subset of Ada: no tasking, no controlled types... VHDL users should easily understand that subset. Allowed Ada95 features: the standard library, child packages. Use assertions.

We try to follow the ‘GNU Coding Standards’ when possible: comments before declarations, two spaces at end of sentences, finish sentences with a dot. But: 3 spaces for indentation.

No trailing spaces, not TAB (HT).

Subprograms must have a comment before to describe it, like:

```
-- Analyze the concurrent statements of PARENT.  
procedure Sem_Concurrent_Statement_Chain (Parent : Iir);
```

The line before the comment must be a blank line (unless this is the first declaration). Don’t repeat the comment before the subprogram body.

- For subprograms:

1. Declare on one line when possible:

```
function Translate_Static_Aggregate (Aggr : Iir) return O_Cnode
```

2. If not possible, put the return on the next line:

```
function Translate_Static_String (Str_Type : Iir; Str_Ident : Name_Id)  
                                return O_Cnode
```

3. If not possible, put parameters and return on the next line:

```
function Create_String_Literal_Var_Inner  
  (Str : Iir; Element_Type : Iir; Str_Type : O_Tnode) return Var_Type
```

4. If not possible, return on the next line:

```
function Translate_Shortcut_Operator  
  (Imp : Iir_Implicit_Function_Declaration; Left, Right : Iir)  
  return O_Enode
```

5. If not possible, one parameter per line, just after subprogram name:

```
procedure Translate_Static_Aggregate_1 (List : in out O_Array_Aggr_List;  
                                       Aggr : Iir;  
                                       Info : Iir;  
                                       El_Type : Iir)
```

6. If not possible, add a return after subprogram name:

```
function Translate_Predefined_TF_Array_Element  
(Op : Predefined_Boolean_Logical;  
 Left, Right : Iir;  
 Res_Type : Iir;  
 Loc : Iir)  
return O_Enode
```

7. If not possible, ask yourself what is wrong! Shorten a name.

- Rule for the ‘is’: one a new line only if the declarative part is not empty:

```
procedure Translate_Assign (Target : Mnode; Expr : Iir; Target_Type :  
↳ Iir)  
is  
    Val : O_Enode;  
begin
```

vs.

```
function Translate_Static_Range_Dir (Expr : Iir) return O_Cnode is  
begin
```

If the parameter line is too long with the ‘is’, put in on a separate line:

```
procedure Predeclare_Scope_Type  
(Scope : in out Var_Scope_Type; Name : O_Ident) is
```

- Generic instantiation: put the generic actual part on a new line:

```
procedure Free is new Ada.Unchecked_Deallocation  
(Action_List, Action_List_Acc);
```

- For if/then statement:

1. ‘then’ on the same line:

```
if Get_Expr_Staticness (Decl) = Locally then
```

2. If not possible, ‘then’ is alone on its line aligned with the ‘if’:

```
if Expr = Null_Iir  
or else Get_Kind (Expr) = Iir_Kind_Overflow_Literal  
then
```

3. For a multiline condition, ‘or else’ and ‘and then’ should start lines.

- ‘Local’ variable declaration: Do not initialize variables, constants must be declared before variables:

```
is  
    N_Info : constant Iir := Get_Sub_Aggregate_Info (Info);  
    Assoc  : Iir;  
    Sub    : Iir;  
begin
```

If the initialization expression has a side effect (such as allocation), do not use a constant.

Implementation of VHDL

This chapter describes several implementation defined aspect of VHDL in GHDL.

12.1 VHDL standards

This is very unfortunate, but there are many versions of the VHDL language, and they aren't backward compatible.

The VHDL language was first standardized in 1987 by IEEE as IEEE 1076-1987, and is commonly referred as VHDL-87. This is certainly the most important version, since most of the VHDL tools are still based on this standard.

Various problems of this first standard have been analyzed by experts groups to give reasonable ways of interpreting the unclear portions of the standard.

VHDL was revised in 1993 by IEEE as IEEE 1076-1993. This revision is still well-known.

Unfortunately, VHDL-93 is not fully compatible with VHDL-87, i.e. some perfectly valid VHDL-87 programs are invalid VHDL-93 programs. Here are some of the reasons:

- the syntax of file declaration has changed (this is the most visible source of incompatibility),
- new keywords were introduced (group, impure, inertial, literal, postponed, pure, reject, rol, ror, shared, sla, sll, sra, srl, unaffected, xnor),
- some dynamic behaviours have changed (the concatenation is one of them),
- rules have been added.

Shared variables were replaced by protected types in the 2000 revision of the VHDL standard. This modification is also known as 1076a. Note that this standard is not fully backward compatible with VHDL-93, since the type of a shared variable must now be a protected type (there was no such restriction before).

Minors corrections were added by the 2002 revision of the VHDL standard. This revision is not fully backward compatible with VHDL-00 since, for example, the value of the *'instance_name* attribute has slightly changed.

The latest version is 2008. Many features have been added, and GHDL doesn't implement all of them.

You can select the VHDL standard expected by GHDL with the `--std=VER` option, where VER is one of the left column of the table below:

87 Select VHDL-87 standard as defined by IEEE 1076-1987. LRM bugs corrected by later revisions are taken into account.

93 Select VHDL-93; VHDL-87 file declarations are not accepted.

93c Select VHDL-93 standard with relaxed rules:

- VHDL-87 file declarations are accepted;
- default binding indication rules of VHDL-02 are used. Default binding rules are often used, but they are particularly obscure before VHDL-02.

00 Select VHDL-2000 standard, which adds protected types.

02 Select VHDL-2002 standard

08 Select VHDL-2008 standard (partially implemented).

The 93, 93c, 00 and 02 standards are considered as compatible: you can elaborate a design mixing these standards. However, 87, 93 and 08 are not compatible.

12.2 PSL implementation

GHDL understands embedded PSL annotations in VHDL files, but not in separate files.

As PSL annotations are embedded within comments, you must analyze and elaborate your design with option `-fpsl` to enable PSL annotations.

A PSL assertion statement must appear within a comment that starts with the `psl` keyword. The keyword must be followed (on the same line) by a PSL keyword such as `assert` or `default`. To continue a PSL statement on the next line, just start a new comment.

A PSL statement is considered as a process. So it is not allowed within a process.

All PSL assertions must be clocked (GHDL doesn't support unclocked assertion). Furthermore only one clock per assertion is allowed.

You can either use a default clock like this:

```
-- psl default clock is rising_edge (CLK);  
-- psl assert always  
--   a -> eventually! b;
```

or use a clocked expression (note the use of parenthesis):

```
-- psl assert (always a -> next[3](b)) @rising_edge (clk);
```

Of course only the simple subset of PSL is allowed.

Currently the built-in functions are not implemented.

12.3 Source representation

According to the VHDL standard, design units (i.e. entities, architectures, packages, package bodies and configurations) may be independently analyzed.

Several design units may be grouped into a design file.

In GHDL, a system file represents a design file. That is, a file compiled by GHDL may contain one or more design units.

It is common to have several design units in a design file.

GHDL does not impose any restriction on the name of a design file (except that the filename may not contain any control character or spaces).

GHDL do not keep a binary representation of the design units analyzed like other VHDL analyzers. The sources of the design units are re-read when needed (for example, an entity is re-read when one of its architecture is analyzed). Therefore, if you delete or modify a source file of a unit analyzed, GHDL will refuse to use it.

12.4 Library database

Each design unit analyzed is placed into a design library. By default, the name of this design library is `work`; however, this can be changed with the `--work=NAME` option of GHDL.

To keep the list of design units in a design library, GHDL creates library files. The name of these files is `NAME-objVER.cf`, where *NAME* is the name of the library, and *VER* the VHDL version (87, 93 or 08) used to analyze the design units.

You don't have to know how to read a library file. You can display it using the `-d` of *ghdl*. The file contains the name of the design units, as well as the location and the dependencies.

The format may change with the next version of GHDL.

12.5 Top entity

There are some restrictions on the entity being at the apex of a design hierarchy:

- The generic must have a default value, and the value of a generic is its default value;
- The ports type must be constrained.

12.6 Using vendor libraries

Many vendors libraries have been analyzed with GHDL. There are usually no problems. Be sure to use the `--work=` option. However, some problems have been encountered.

GHDL follows the VHDL LRM (the manual which defines VHDL) more strictly than other VHDL tools. You could try to relax the restrictions by using the `--std=93c`, `-fexplicit`, `-frelaxed-rules` and `--warn-no-vital-generic`.

12.7 Interfacing to other languages

Interfacing with foreign languages is possible only on GNU/Linux systems.

You can define a subprogram in a foreign language (such as *C* or *Ada*) and import it in a VHDL design.

12.7.1 Foreign declarations

Only subprograms (functions or procedures) can be imported, using the foreign attribute. In this example, the *sin* function is imported:

```
package math is
    function sin (v : real) return real;
    attribute foreign of sin : function is "VHPIDIRECT sin";
end math;

package body math is
    function sin (v : real) return real is
    begin
        assert false severity failure;
```

```
end sin;  
end math;
```

A subprogram is made foreign if the *foreign* attribute decorates it. This attribute is declared in the 1993 revision of the `std.standard` package. Therefore, you cannot use this feature in VHDL 1987.

The decoration is achieved through an attribute specification. The attribute specification must be in the same declarative part as the subprogram and must be after it. This is a general rule for specifications. The value of the specification must be a locally static string.

Even when a subprogram is foreign, its body must be present. However, since it won't be called, you can make it empty or simply but an assertion.

The value of the attribute must start with `VHDLIDIRECT` (an upper-case keyword followed by one or more blanks). The linkage name of the subprogram follows.

12.7.2 Restrictions on foreign declarations

Any subprogram can be imported. GHDL puts no restrictions on foreign subprograms. However, the representation of a type or of an interface in a foreign language may be obscure. Most of non-composite types are easily imported:

integer types They are represented on a 32 bits word. This generally corresponds to *int* for *C* or *Integer* for *Ada*.

physical types They are represented on a 64 bits word. This generally corresponds to the *long long* for *C* or *Long_Long_Integer* for *Ada*.

floating point types They are represented on a 64 bits floating point word. This generally corresponds to *double* for *C* or *Long_Float* for *Ada*.

enumeration types They are represented on 8 bits or 32 bits word, if the number of literals is greater than 256. There is no corresponding C types, since arguments are not promoted.

Non-composite types are passed by value. For the *in* mode, this corresponds to the *C* or *Ada* mechanism. The *out* and *inout* interfaces of non-composite types are gathered in a record and this record is passed by reference as the first argument to the subprogram. As a consequence, you shouldn't use *in* and *inout* modes in foreign subprograms, since they are not portable.

Records are represented like a *C* structure and are passed by reference to subprograms.

Arrays with static bounds are represented like a *C* array, whose length is the number of elements, and are passed by reference to subprograms.

Unconstrained array are represented by a fat pointer. Do not use unconstrained arrays in foreign subprograms.

Accesses to an unconstrained array is a fat pointer. Other accesses correspond to an address and are passed to a subprogram like other non-composite types.

Files are represented by a 32 bits word, which corresponds to an index in a table.

12.7.3 Linking with foreign object files

You may add additional files or options during the link using the `-Wl`, of *GHDL*, as described in `Elaboration_command`. For example:

```
ghdl -e -Wl,-lm math_tb
```

will create the `math_tb` executable with the `lm` (mathematical) library.

Note the `c` library is always linked with an executable.

12.7.4 Starting a simulation from a foreign program

You may run your design from an external program. You just have to call the `ghdl_main` function which can be defined:

in C:

```
extern int ghdl_main (int argc, char **argv);
```

in Ada:

```
with System;
...
function Ghdl_Main (Argc : Integer; Argv : System.Address)
  return Integer;
pragma import (C, Ghdl_Main, "ghdl_main");
```

This function must be called once, and returns 0 at the end of the simulation. In case of failure, this function does not return. This has to be fixed.

12.7.5 Linking with Ada

As explained previously in *Starting a simulation from a foreign program*, you can start a simulation from an *Ada* program. However the build process is not trivial: you have to elaborate your *Ada* program and your *VHDL* design.

First, you have to analyze all your design files. In this example, we suppose there is only one design file, `design.vhdl`.

```
$ ghdl -a design.vhdl
```

Then, bind your design. In this example, we suppose the entity at the design apex is `design`.

```
$ ghdl --bind design
```

Finally, compile, bind your *Ada* program at link it with your *VHDL* design:

```
$ gnatmake my_prog -larges `ghdl --list-link design`
```

12.7.6 Using GRT from Ada

Warning: This topic is only for advanced users knowing how to use *Ada* and *GNAT*. This is provided only for reference, I have tested this once before releasing *GHDL* 0.19 but this is not checked at each release.

The simulator kernel of *GHDL* named *GRT* is written in *Ada95* and contains a very light and slightly adapted version of *VHPI*. Since it is an *Ada* implementation it is called *AVHPI*. Although being tough, you may interface to *AVHPI*.

For using *AVHPI*, you need the sources of *GHDL* and to recompile them (at least the *GRT* library). This library is usually compiled with a *No_Run_Time* pragma, so that the user does not need to install the *GNAT* runtime library. However, you certainly want to use the usual runtime library and want to avoid this pragma. For this, reset the *GRT_PRAGMA_FLAG* variable.

```
$ make GRT_PRAGMA_FLAG= grt-all
```

Since *GRT* is a self-contained library, you don't want *gnatlink* to fetch individual object files (furthermore this doesn't always work due to tricks used in *GRT*). For this, remove all the object files and make the `.ali` files read-only.

```
$ rm *.o
$ chmod -w *.ali
```

You may then install the sources files and the .ali files. I have never tested this step.

You are now ready to use it.

For example, here is an example, test_grt.adb which displays the top level design name.

```
with System; use System;
with Grt.Avhpi; use Grt.Avhpi;
with Ada.Text_IO; use Ada.Text_IO;
with Ghdl_Main;

procedure Test_Grt is
  -- VHPI handle.
  H : VhpiHandleT;
  Status : Integer;

  -- Name.
  Name : String (1 .. 64);
  Name_Len : Integer;
begin
  -- Elaborate and run the design.
  Status := Ghdl_Main (0, Null_Address);

  -- Display the status of the simulation.
  Put_Line ("Status is " & Integer'Image (Status));

  -- Get the root instance.
  Get_Root_Inst(H);

  -- Disp its name using vhpi API.
  Vhpi_Get_Str (VhpiNameP, H, Name, Name_Len);
  Put_Line ("Root instance name: " & Name (1 .. Name_Len));
end Test_Grt;
```

First, analyze and bind your design:

```
$ ghdl -a counter.vhdl
$ ghdl --bind counter
```

Then build the whole:

```
$ gnatmake test_grt -aL`grt_ali_path` -aI`grt_src_path` -largS
`ghdl --list-link counter`
```

Finally, run your design:

```
$ ./test_grt
Status is 0
Root instance name: counter
```

Implementation of VITAL

This chapter describes how VITAL is implemented in GHDL. Support of VITAL is really in a preliminary stage. Do not expect too much of it as now.

13.1 VITAL packages

The VITAL standard or IEEE 1076.4 was first published in 1995, and revised in 2000.

The version of the VITAL packages depends on the VHDL standard. VITAL 1995 packages are used with the VHDL 1987 standard, while VITAL 2000 packages are used with other standards. This choice is based on the requirements of VITAL: VITAL 1995 requires the models follow the VHDL 1987 standard, while VITAL 2000 requires the models follow VHDL 1993.

The VITAL 2000 packages were slightly modified so that they conform to the VHDL 1993 standard (a few functions are made pure and a few one impure).

13.2 VHDL restrictions for VITAL

The VITAL standard (partially) implemented is the IEEE 1076.4 standard published in 1995.

This standard defines restriction of the VHDL language usage on VITAL model. A *VITAL model* is a design unit (entity or architecture) decorated by the *VITAL_Level0* or *VITAL_Level1* attribute. These attributes are defined in the *ieee.VITAL_Timing* package.

Currently, only VITAL level 0 checks are implemented. VITAL level 1 models can be analyzed, but GHDL doesn't check they comply with the VITAL standard.

Moreover, GHDL doesn't check (yet) that timing generics are not read inside a VITAL level 0 model prior the VITAL annotation.

The analysis of a non-conformant VITAL model fails. You can disable the checks of VITAL restrictions with the *-no-vital-checks*. Even when restrictions are not checked, SDF annotation can be performed.

13.3 Backannotation

Backannotation is the process of setting VITAL generics with timing information provided by an external files.

The external files must be SDF (Standard Delay Format) files. GHDL supports a tiny subset of SDF version 2.1, other version number can be used, provided no features added by the next version are used.

Hierarchical instance names are not supported. However you can use a list of instances. If there is no instance, the top entity will be annotated and the celltype must be the name of the top entity. If there is at least one instance, the last instance name must be a component instantiation label, and the celltype must be the name of the component declaration instantiated.

Instances being annotated are not required to be VITAL compliant. However generics being annotated must follow rules of VITAL (e.g., type must be a suitable vital delay type).

Currently, only timing constraints applying on a timing generic of type *VitalDelayType01* has been implemented. This SDF annotator is just a proof of concept. Features will be added with the following GHDL release.

13.4 Negative constraint calculation

Negative constraint delay adjustment are necessary to handle negative constraint such as a negative setup time. This step is defined in the VITAL standard and should occur after backannotation.

GHDL does not do negative constraint calculation. It fails to handle models with negative constraint. I hope to be able to add this phase soon.

Part IV

Appendix

Roadmap | Future Improvements

I have several axes for *GHDL* improvements:

- Documentation.
- Better diagnostics messages (warning and error).
- Full support of VHDL-2008.
- Optimization (simulation speed).
- Graphical tools (to see waves and to debug)
- Style checks
- VITAL acceleration

Todo: Under investigation on how to build that beast.

[original entry](#)

15.1 General guidelines to edit the documentation

1. It's better for version control systems and diff tools to break lines at a sensible number of characters. Long lines appear as one diff. Also merging is more complex because merges are line based. Long unbreakable items may be longer (links, refs, ...). We chose to use 160 chars.
2. Please indent all directive content by 3 spaces (not 2, and no tabs).
3. Please use * as an itemize character, since – and + are supported by docutils, but not officially supported by Sphinx'.
4. Please underline all headlines with at least as many characters as the headline is long. Following the Python pattern for headline the levels are:

```
#####
***** (sometimes skipped in small documents)
=====
-----
\/////////
```

5. It's not required to write

```
:samp: `code`
```

The default role for

```
`...`
```

is samp. :samp: is only required when you want to write italic text in code text.

```
print 1+variable
```

Now, variable becomes italic.

Please simplify all usages of ... to ... for readability. Here are the regular expressions for an editor like Notepad++:

- Search pattern:: (.+?)

- Replace pattern:: \1
6. Each backend has one folder and each platform/compiler has one file. Please note that page headlines are different from ToC headline:

```
.. toctree::  
    :hidden:  
  
    ToC entry <file1>  
    file2
```

7. A documentation should not use “you”, “we”, ..., because it’s not an interactive conversation or informal letter. It’s like a thesis, everything is structured and formal. However, to make it more friendly to newcomers, we agree to allow informal language in section ‘*Quick Start Guide*’.
8. Please keep errors low.

15.2 Guidelines to edit section ‘Building’

I prefer a text block, which explains how a compilation works, what I can configure for that backend, etc. After that, I prefer a code block with e.g. bash instructions on how to compile a backend. A list of instructions with embedded bash lines is not helpful. An experienced, as well as novice user, would like to copy a set of instructions into the shell. But it should be stated what these instructions will do. Complex flows like for GCC, can be split into multiple shell code blocks. Moreover, I find it essential, to demonstrate when and where to change directories.

We would like to see a list like

- gcc (Gnu Compiler Collection)
- gcc-gnat (Ada compiler for GCC)
- llvm-del (LLVM development package)
- ...

The goal is to also explain what a user is installing and what the few lines in the build description do. Now they know the name, can search for similar names if they have another package manager or distro or can ask Google/Wikipedia. We often find many build receipts with cryptic shell code and to execute this unknown stuff with sudo is not comfortable. We would like to know what it does before hitting enter.

15.3 Documentation configuration

- Python snippet for Sphinx’s *conf.py* to extract the current version number from Git (latest tag name). [#200, #221]
- Reference *genindex.html* from the navigation bar. [#200]
- Create “parts” (LaTeX terminology / chapter headlines) in navigation bar. [#200]
- **Intersphinx files** [#200]

- To decompress the inventory file: `curl -s http://ghdl.readthedocs.io/en/latest/objects.inv | tail -n+5 | openssl zlib -d`. From [how-to-uncompress-zlib-data-in-unix](#).

- External ref and link to section:

```
:ref:`GHDL Roadmap <ghdl:CHANGE:Roadmap>`
```

- External ref to option (no link):

```
:ghdl:option:`--ieee`  
:option:`ghdl:--ieee`
```

15.4 CSS

- The indentation of the elements in the side menu have been modified. They are fixed por levels 1, 2 and 3 (#294) and 4 (later).
- The RTD menu (bottom-left) has been modified (#294):
 - No headlines are shown. It is not possible to remove only one of them with CSS only (JS would be required). However, because the content in most of the lines is self-explained, it is preferred not to show any.
 - The Search box is removed.

15.5 Dist

- Ubuntu uses *dash* instead of *bash* when a shell script is run. As a result, some functionalities, such as arrays like `array[1]`, are not supported. Therefore, build scripts in *dist/linux* should not use those functionalities unless they are sourced in a *bash* shell. That is, `travis-ci.sh` uses arrays, since it is sourced in the Travis CI machine. But `docker-buildtest.sh` and `buildtest.sh` do not use any. The same applies to the scripts in *testsuite*.

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