A gentle (re)introduction to C

with Olve Maudal



A one day workshop at EDC Software 2022, September 13

https://github.com/equinor/ReintroductionToC_Sep2022

- Introduction
- Getting started
- Organizing
- Optimizing
- Pointers, arrays and structures
- Tools and services
- Outroduction

Introduction

#d7f567 A gentle (re)introduction to C | 1 day course | Code | Olve Maudal

- >> Title: A gentle (re)introduction to C
- >> Scheduled: Tuesday 1000
- >> Speaker(s): Olve Maudal
- >> Length of session: 1 day
- >> Room: Restaurant room (30?)
- >> Max # of participants: 24
- >> Type of session: workshop
- >> Description: C is the mother of most programming languages and it is still one of the most popular languages (eg https://www.tiobe.com/tiobe-index/). This is a chance to (re)learn this extremely sharp and efficient programming language. Starting from scratch with "Hello, world!" we end up with a simple but useful webservice!
- >> Level: intermediate
- >> Speaker bio: Olve has been programming nearly every day for more than 40 years. My love for C goes deep and will last forever.
- >> Extra info: This workshop assumes that you already know C or another programming language, and that you have access to a development environment supporting C99 or better.

What is your background with programming?

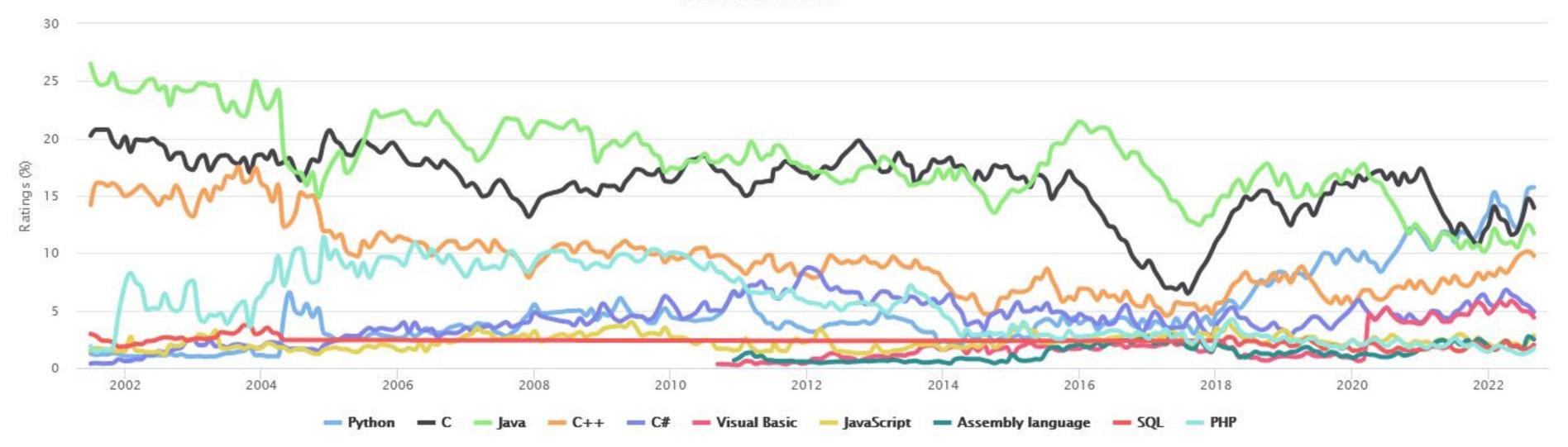
What is your experience with C?

What is your expectations for this course?

Why would anyone want to learn about C (or C++) these days?

TIOBE Programming Community Index

Source: www.tiobe.com



Programming Language	2022	2017	2012	2007	2002	1997	1992	1987
Python	1	5	8	7	12	28	-	(#)
С	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	1
Java	3	1	2	1	1	16	177.6	95 7 0
C++	4	3	3	3	3	2	2	6
C#	5	4	4	8	14	-	+	œ
Visual Basic	6	14	. 	-	-	5	-	3
JavaScript	7	8	10	9	8	24	T.	88 7 0

















C is widely used for systems programming in implementing operating systems and embedded system applications. This is for several reasons:

- The code generated after compilation doesn't demand many system features, and can be invoked from some boot code in a straightforward manner it's simple to execute.
- The C language statements and expressions typically map well on to sequences of instructions for the target processor, and consequently there is a low run-time demand on system resources it's fast to execute.
- The language makes it easy to overlay structures onto blocks of binary data, allowing the data to be comprehended, navigated and modified it can write data structures, even file systems.
- The language supports a rich set of operators, including bit manipulation, for integer arithmetic and logic, and perhaps different sizes of floating point numbers it can process appropriately-structured data effectively.
- Platform hardware can be accessed with pointers and type punning, so system-specific features (e.g. Control/Status Registers, I/O registers) can be configured and used with code written in C it interacts well with the platform it's running on.
- Depending on the linker and environment, C code can also call libraries written in assembly language, and may be called from assembly language it interoperates well with other code.
- C has a very mature and broad ecosystem, including open source compilers, debuggers and utilities, and is the de facto standard. It's likely the drivers already exist in C, or that there is a similar CPU architecture as a back-end of a C compiler, so there is reduced incentive to choose another language.

A consequence of C's wide availability and efficiency is that compilers, libraries and interpreters of other programming languages are often implemented in C. For example, the reference implementations of Python, Perl, Ruby, and PHP are written in C.

C enables programmers to create efficient implementations of algorithms and data structures, because the layer of abstraction from hardware is thin, and its overhead is low, an important criterion for computationally intensive programs. For example, the GNU Multiple Precision Arithmetic Library, the GNU Scientific Library, Mathematica, and MATLAB are completely or partially written in C. Many languages support calling library functions in C, for example, the Python-based framework NumPy uses C for the high-performance and hardware-interacting aspects.

C is sometimes used as an **intermediate language by implementations of other languages**. This approach may be used for portability or convenience; by using C as an intermediate language, additional machine-specific code generators are not necessary. **C has some features, such as line-number preprocessor directives and optional superfluous commas at the end of initializer lists, that support compilation of generated code**. However, some of C's shortcomings have prompted the development of other C-based languages specifically designed for use as intermediate languages, such as C--.

	Energy		Time		Mb
(c) C	1.00	(c) C	1.00	(c) Pascal	1.00
(c) Rust	1.03	(c) Rust	1.04	(c) Go	1.05
(c) C++	1.34	(c) C++	1.56	(c) C	1.17
(c) Ada	1.70	(c) Ada	1.85	(c) Fortran	1.24
(v) Java	1.98	(v) Java	1.89	(c) C++	1.34
(c) Pascal	2.14	(c) Chapel	2.14	(c) Ada	1.47
(c) Chapel	2.18	(c) Go	2.83	(c) Rust	1.54
(v) Lisp	2.27	(c) Pascal	3.02	(v) Lisp	1.92
(c) Ocaml	2.40	(c) Ocaml	3.09	(c) Haskell	2.45
(c) Fortran	2.52	(v) C#	3.14	(i) PHP	2.57
(c) Swift	2.79	(v) Lisp	3.40	(c) Swift	2.71
(c) Haskell	3.10	(c) Haskell	3.55	(i) Python	2.80
(v) C#	3.14	(c) Swift	4.20	(c) Ocaml	2.82
(c) Go	3.23	(c) Fortran	4.20	(v) C#	2.85
(i) Dart	3.83	(v) F#	6.30	(i) Hack	3.34
(v) F#	4.13	(i) JavaScript	6.52	(v) Racket	3.52
(i) JavaScript	4.45	(i) Dart	6.67	(i) Ruby	3.97
(v) Racket	7.91	(v) Racket	11.27	(c) Chapel	4.00
(i) TypeScript	21.50	(i) Hack	26.99	(v) F#	4.25
(i) Hack	24.02	(i) PHP	27.64	(i) JavaScript	4.59
(i) PHP	29.30	(v) Erlang	36.71	(i) TypeScript	4.69
(v) Erlang	42.23	(i) Jruby	43.44	(v) Java	6.01
(i) Lua	45.98	(i) TypeScript	46.20	(i) Perl	6.62
(i) Jruby	46.54	(i) Ruby	59.34	(i) Lua	6.72
(i) Ruby	69.91	(i) Perl	65.79	(v) Erlang	7.20
(i) Python	75.88	(i) Python	71.90	(i) Dart	8.64
(i) Perl	79.58	(i) Lua	82.91	(i) Jruby	19.84

Getting started

These following slides are just unabridged and unfiltered notes that I use while doing an ad-hoc course. I do share the slides during and after the event, but I do not actually show them during the course - it is mostly live coding and discussions.

Beware, out of context and without explanation, the code snippets and examples are often just

complete nonsense...

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
    puts("Hello");
    return 0;
}
```

walk through line by line

- include declarations for standard input/output
- main() is the start point for C programs (in hosted environments)
- main(void) means taking no arguments
- puts() is a standard library function
- string literal
- return status to the runtime environment

cc -o hello hello.c && ./hello echo \$?

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

// int puts(const char *);
// #define EOF (-1)
// #define EXIT_FAILURE 1
// #define EXIT_SUCCESS 0

int main(void)
{
   if (puts("Hello") == EOF)
      return EXIT_FAILURE;
   return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```

Mention macros, but do not elaborate Mention the preprocessor and linking, but do not elaborate Do not discuss braces and compound statements here

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

int main(void)
{
    int the_answer = 42;
    if (printf("The answer is %d\n", the_answer) == EOF)
        return EXIT_FAILURE;
    return EXIT_SUCCESS;
}
```

Promote cppreference
Promote man7
Discuss return values
Show != 17

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
   int the_answer = 42;
   printf("The answer is %d!\n", the_answer);
   return 0;
}
```

Discuss being too pedantic Errors cause by error checking Demonstrate implicit return

Notes:

type in program while explaining declaring without initialization assignment mention indeterminate values, trap condition discuss compound statements, aka blocks do not discuss while to for transformation compile and run the program

f2c_table.c

```
$ cc f2c_table.c -o f2c_table

$ ./f2c_table

0 -17

20 -6

40 4

60 15

80 26

100 37

120 48

140 60

160 71

180 82

200 93

220 104

240 115

260 126

280 137

300 148
```

Exercise

The lowest natural temperature ever directly recorded at ground level on Earth is −89.2 °C (−128.6 °F) at the then-Soviet Vostok Station in Antarctica on 21 July 1983.

The current official highest registered air temperature on Earth is 56.7 °C (134.1 °F), recorded on 10 July 1913 in Death Valley in the United States.

Use the code snippet on this slide as inspiration. Write a C program (c2f_table.c) that prints out a Celsius to Fahrenheit conversion table from -90 Celsius to 60 Celsius with a step interval of 10 degrees.

Extra:

- Experiment with different ways to write the program. Experiment with do-while loops, for loops, and gotos
- Be a teacher! Talk to other students. Explain things if needed.

source: Exercise inspired by K&R, see also: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lowest_temperature_recorded_on_Earth https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highest_temperature_recorded_on_Earth

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
   int fahr, celsius;
   int lower, upper, step;

   lower = -90; // lower limit of temperature table
   upper = 60; // upper limit
   step = 10; // step size

   celsius = lower;
   while (celsius <= upper) {
      fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
      printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
      celsius = celsius + step;
   }

   return 0;
}</pre>
```

Sample solutions

```
$ cc c2f_table.c -o c2f_table
$ ./c2f_table
 -90 -130
 -80 -112
 -70 -94
 -60 -76
 -50 -58
 -40 -40
 -30 -22
      -4
 -20
 -10
      14
      32
  0
      50
  10
      68
  20
      86
  30
  40 104
  50 122
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
    int lower_limit_of_temp_table = -90;
    int upper_limit_of_temp_table = 60;
    int temp_step = 10;

    int celsius = lower_limit_of_temp_table;
    while (celsius <= upper_limit_of_temp_table) {
        int fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
        celsius += temp_step;
    }

    return 0;
}</pre>
```

```
#include <stdio.h>

#include <stdio.h>

30 86

40 104

50 122

60 140

int lower_limit_of_temp_table = -90;
    int upper_limit_of_temp_table = 60;
    int temp_step = 10;

for (int celsius = lower_limit_of_temp_table; celsius <= upper_limit_of_temp_table; celsius += temp_step) {
    int fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
    printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
}

return 0;</pre>
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
   int celsius = -90;

   do {
      int fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
      printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
      celsius += 10;
   } while (celsius <= 60);

return 0;
}</pre>
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
{
   for (int c = -90; c <= 60; c += 10)
       printf("%4d %4d\n", c, c * 9 / 5 + 32);
}</pre>
```

```
int printf(const char *, ...);
int main() {
        int c = -90, f;
again: f = c * 9 / 5 + 32;
        printf("%4d %4d\n", c, f);
        if ((c += 10) <= 60) goto again;
}</pre>
```

Organizing

```
int main(void)
{
   int lower = -90; // lower limit
   int upper = 60; // upper limit
   int step = 10; // temp step

   // print temp table
   int celsius = lower;
   while (celsius <= upper) {
      int fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32; // to fahrenheit from celsisus
      printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
      celsius += step;
   }

   return 0;
}</pre>
```

Notes:

start with sample answer demonstrate transformation between for loops and while loops

```
int main(void)
{
   int lower = -90; // lower limit
   int upper = 60; // upper limit
   int step = 10; // temp step

   // print temp table
   for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {
      int fahr = celsius * 9 / 5 + 32; // to fahrenheit from celsisus
      printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
   }

   return 0;
}</pre>
```

Notes:

discuss comments in code

```
int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
{
    return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
}
int main(void)
{
    int lower = -90; // lower limit
    int upper = 60; // upper limit
    int step = 10; // temp step

    // print temp table
    for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
    }
    return 0;
}</pre>
```

Notes:

comments are inspiration for refactoring

```
int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
   return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step)
   for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {</pre>
       int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
int main(void)
   int lower = -90; // lower limit
   int upper = 60; // upper limit
   int step = 10; // temp step
   print_temp_table(lower, upper, step);
   return 0;
```

Notes:

discuss descriptive variable names discuss scope of variables, related to length of names

```
extern int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
    return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
static void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step)
    for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {</pre>
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
int main(void)
    int lower_limit = -90;
    int upper_limit = 60;
    int temp_step = 10;
    print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step);
    return 0;
```

Notes:

discuss symbol names discuss external and internal linkage (extern vs static) mention command query separation discuss depth of calls mention dependency injection, but do not demonstrate

c2f_table.c

```
#include <stdio.h>
extern int to_fahrenheit(int celsius);
static void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step)
   for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
int main(void)
    int lower_limit = -90;
   int upper limit = 60;
   int temp_step = 10;
    print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step);
    return 0;
```

Notes:

demonstrate what happens if tempconv.c converts to double show objdump -d of objectfiles before and after

tempconv.c

```
int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
{
    return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
}
int to_celsius(int fahrenheit)
{
    return 5 * (fahrenheit - 32) / 9;
}
```

```
-90 -130
-80 -112
-70 -94
-60 -76
-50
    -58
-40
    -40
    -22
-30
-20
     -4
-10
     14
     32
 0
     50
10
20
     68
30
     86
40
    104
    122
50
60 140
```

c2f_table.c

```
#include "tempconv.h"
#include <stdio.h>
static void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step)
    for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {</pre>
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
int main(void)
    int lower_limit = -90;
    int upper_limit = 60;
    int temp_step = 10;
    print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step);
    return 0;
```

tempconv.h

```
#ifndef TEMPCONV_H_INCLUDED
#define TEMPCONV_H_INCLUDED
int to_fahrenheit(int celcisus);
int to_celsius(int fahrenheit);
#endif
tempconv.c
#include "tempconv.h"
int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
    return celsius *9 / 5 + 32;
int to_celsius(int fahrenheit)
   return 5 * (fahrenheit - 32) / 9;
```

```
$ cc -c tempconv.c
$ cc -c c2f_table.c
$ cc tempconv.o c2f_table-o -o c2f_table
$ ./c2f_table
```

```
-90 -130
-80 -112
-70 -94
-60
    -76
-50
    -58
-40
    -40
-30
    -22
     -4
-20
-10
     14
 0
     32
10
     50
20
     68
30
     86
40
    104
    122
50
60 140
```

c2f_table.c

```
#include "tempconv.h"

#include <stdio.h>

static void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step)
{
    for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
    }
}

int main(void)
{
    int lower_limit = -90;
    int upper_limit = 60;
    int temp_step = 10;
    print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step);
    return 0;
}</pre>
```

tempconv.h

```
#ifndef TEMPCONV_H_INCLUDED
#define TEMPCONV_H_INCLUDED

int to_fahrenheit(int celcisus);
int to_celsius(int fahrenheit);
#endif
```

tempconv.c

```
#include "tempconv.h"

int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
{
    return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
}

int to_celsius(int fahrenheit)
{
    return 5 * (fahrenheit - 32) / 9;
}
```

Makefile

```
$ ls
Makefile c2f_table.c tempconv.c tempconv.h
$ make
cc -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 -c c2f_table.c
cc -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 -c tempconv.c
cc -o c2f_table -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 c2f_table.o tempconv.o
$ make test
./c2f_table
-90 -130
...
60 140
$ make clean
rm *.o
rm c2f_table
$
```

```
Notes:
extern int to fahrenheit(int celsius)
                                                                                                      demonstrate to_othertempscaple injection
    return celsius * 9 / 5 + 32;
static void print temp table(int lower, int upper, int step)
   for (int celsius = lower; celsius <= upper; celsius += step) {
        int fahr = to_fahrenheit(celsius);
        printf("%4d %4d\n", celsius, fahr);
                                                                   #include <stdio.h>
int main(void)
                                                                   extern int to_fahrenheit(int celsius)
    int lower_limit = -90;
   int upper_limit = 60;
                                                                       return celsius *9/5 + 32;
   int temp_step = 10;
   print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step);
                                                                   static void print_temp_table(int lower, int upper, int step, int to_othertempscale(int))
    return 0;
                                                                       for (int temp = lower; temp <= upper; temp += step)</pre>
                                                                           printf("%4d %4d\n", temp, to_othertempscale(temp));
                                                                   int main(void)
                                                                       int lower_limit = -90;
                                                                       int upper_limit = 60;
                                                                       int temp_step = 10;
                                                                       print_temp_table(lower_limit, upper_limit, temp_step, to_fahrenheit);
                                                                       return 0;
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdib.h>

int main(void)
{
    int count = 10;
    while (count--) {
        int num = rand();
        printf("%d\n", num);
    }
    return 0;
}
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>

int main(int argc, char * argv[])
{
    for (int i = 0; i < argc; ++i)
        printf("[%d] %s\n", i, argv[i]);
    return 0;
}</pre>
```

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <time.h>
int main(int argc, char * argv[])
   if (argc != 2) {
        printf("usage: randnumbers NUM\n");
       return EXIT_FAILURE;
   srand(time(NULL));
   int count = atoi(argv[1]);
   while (count--) {
       int num = rand();
        printf("%d\n", num);
   return EXIT_SUCCESS;
```

```
#include <stdbool.h>
#include <stdio.h>
static bool isprime(int number)
   if (number < 2)</pre>
        return false;
   if (number == 2)
        return true;
   for (int denominator = 2; denominator < number; ++denominator)</pre>
        if (number % denominator == 0)
            return false;
    return true;
int main(void)
   for (int num = 0; num < 20; ++num)
        if (isprime(num))
            printf("%d\n", num);
    return 0;
```

Exercise

```
#include <stdbool.h>
#include <stdio.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
static bool isprime(int number)
    if (number < 2)</pre>
        return false;
    if (number == 2)
        return true;
    for (int denominator = 2; denominator < number; ++denominator)</pre>
        if (number % denominator == 0)
            return false;
    return true;
int main(void)
    int count = 10;
    while (count) {
        int num = rand();
```

if (isprime(num)) {

--count;

return 0;

printf("%d\n", num);

```
$ cc randprime.c -o randprime
$ ./randprime
1350490027
2044897763
35005211
1369133069
135497281
1120048829
213975407
1504569917
1398295499
243268139
$
```

A prime is a natural number greater than 1 that is not a product of two smaller natural numbers. The first primes are: 2 3 5 7 11 13 17 19 ...

To the left is a correct, but very slow and very naive, implementation of a program that prints out ten random primes. Do not change the algorithm for <code>isprime()</code>, this exercise is about how to organize code. (No worries, we will optimize the code soon!)

- 1) Type in this program and verify that you get 10 primes
- 2) Extract isprime() into primelib.h and primelib.c
- 3) Compile primelib.c and randprime.c separately. Then link them together to create an executable.
- 4) Estimate how long it would take to create 1000 random primes with this isprime function in your runtime environment. How much difference if you compile with "-O0" vs "-O2"?

Extra:

- 5) Create a Makefile that builds your program (see: https://www.gnu.org/software/make/manual/make.html#Simple-Makefile for inspiration)
- 6) Add support for some very simple command line arguments, eg "./randprime 20"
- 6) Be a teacher! Help and discuss the exercise with other students

primelib.c

randprime.c

Sample solution

```
#include "primelib.h"

bool isprime(int number)
{
    if (number < 2)
        return false;
    if (number == 2)
        return true;
    for (int denominator = 2; denominator < number; ++denominator)
        if (number % denominator == 0)
            return false;
    return true;
    primelib.h
}</pre>
```

```
#ifndef PRIMELIB_H_INCLUDED
#define PRIMELIB_H_INCLUDED

#include <stdbool.h>
bool isprime(int number);
#endif
```

#include "primelib.h" #include <stdio.h> #include <stdlib.h> int main(void) { int count = 10; while (count) { int num = rand(); if (isprime(num)) { printf("%d\n", num); --count; } } return 0;

Makefile

```
all : randprime

test : randprime
    @date
    ./randprime
    @date

randprime : randprime.c primelib.o
    cc -00 -o randprime -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 randprime.c primelib.o

primelib.o : primelib.c primelib.h
    cc -00 -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 -c primelib.c

clean :
    rm *.o
    rm randprime
```

```
$ make
cc -00 -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 -c primelib.c
cc -00 -o randprime -Wall -Wextra -Werror --pedantic -std=c17 randprime.c
primelib.o
$ make test
Sat Aug 27 22:52:21 CEST 2022
./randprime
1350490027
2044897763
35005211
1369133069
135497281
1120048829
213975407
1504569917
1398295499
243268139
Sat Aug 27 22:52:51 CEST 2022
```