

# Discuss C++ Template Downcast

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## Table of Contents

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### Contents

- Original Discuss
- The problem
- My answer to the problem
  - First we discuss ff

- Then we discuss f

This is a discuss in C board in bbs.sjtu.edu.cn, about type down-cast in C++ template.

## Original Discuss

<http://bbs.sjtu.edu.cn/bbstcon,board,C,reid,1330078933,file,M.1330078933.A.html>

## The problem

Today I read a book about we can do cast-down in template, so I write this to test:

```
1  template <bool _Test, class _Type =  
void>  
2  struct enable_if { };  
3  
4  template<class _Type>  
5  struct enable_if<true, _Type> {  
6      typedef _Type type;  
7  };
```

```
8
9  class A { };
10 class B : A { };
11
12 template <typename T>
13 struct traits { static int const value = false; };
14
15 template <>
16 struct traits<A> { static int const value = true; };
17
18 template <typename T>
19 void f(T, typename enable_if<traits<T>::value>::type* = 0) { }
20
21 template <>
22 void f<A>(A, enable_if<traits<A>::value>::type*) { }
23
24
25
26 template <typename T>
27 class BB {};
28
29 template <typename T>
30 class DD : public BB<T> {};
31
32 template <typename T> void ff(BB<T>)
33 {};
34
35 int main(int argc, char * argv[])
```

```
35 {  
36     A a; B b;  
37     DD<long> dd;  
38     //f(b);  
39     ff(dd);  
40 }
```

It is strange when `f` it don't allow my specified `f<A>` .

But in `ff` it allowed `ff<BB<long>>` .

Tested under VC10 and GCC3.4

## My answer to the problem

Let's think ourself as compiler to see what happened there.

Define mark `#` : `A#B` is the instantiated result when we put `B` into the parameter `T` of `A<T>` .

## First we discuss `ff`

```
1 DD<long> dd;
```

After this sentence, the compiler saw the instantiation of `DD<long>` , so it instantiate `DD#long` , and also `BB#long` .

```
1 ff(dd);
```

This sentence required the compiler to calculate set of overloading functions.

Step 1 we need to infer `T` of `ff<T>` from argument `DD#long` -> `BB<T>` . Based on the inference rule:

```
Argument with type :code:`class_template_name<T>` can be use to infer :code:`T`` .
```

So compiler inferred `T` as `long` . Here if it is not `BB` but `CC` which is complete un-related, we can also infer, as long as `CC` is a template like `CC<T>` .

Step 2 Template Specialization Resolution.  
There is only one template here so we matched `ff<T>` .

Step 3 Template Instantiation

After inferred  $\text{long} \rightarrow T$ , compiler instantiated  $\text{ff}\#\text{long}$ .

Set of available overloading functions :  
 $\{\text{ff}\#\text{long}\}$

Then overloading resolution found the only match  $\text{ff}\#\text{long}$ , checked its real parameter  $\text{DD}\#\text{long}$  can be down-cast to formal parameter  $\text{BB}\#\text{long}$ .

## Then we discuss f

```
1 f(b);
```

Calculate set of overloading functions.

Step 1 infer all template parameters for template  $f$ . According to inference rule:

Parameter with type  $T$  can be used to infer  $T$ .

So  $B \rightarrow T$  is inferred.

Step 2 Template Specialization Resolution.

Here B is not A so we can not apply specialization of `f<A>` , remaining `f<T>` as the only alternative.

### Step 3 Template Instantiation.

When we put B into `f<T>` to instantiate as `f#B` , we need to instantiate `traits#B`` .

There is no specialization for B so we use `template traits<T> , traits#B::value=false` , so `enable_if#false` didn't contains a type ,an error occurred.

The only template is mismatch, available overloading functions is empty set. So we got an error.