

Modern C++ Programming

21. ADVANCED TOPICS I

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Move Semantic

Move semantics refers in transferring ownership of resources from one object to another

Differently from *copy semantic*, *move semantic* does not duplicate the original resource

In C++ every expression is either an **rvalue** or an **lvalue**

- a **lvalue** (left) represents an expression that occupies some identifiable location in memory
- a **rvalue** (right) is an expression that does not represent an object occupying some identifiable location in memory

```
int x = 5;           // "x" is an lvalue, "5" is an rvalue
int y = 10;          // "y" is an lvalue

int z = (x * y); // "z" is an lvalue, (x * y) is an rvalue
```

C++11 introduces a new kind of *reference* called **rvalue reference** [X&&](#)

- An **rvalue reference** only binds to an **rvalue**, that is a temporary
- An **lvalue reference** only binds to an **lvalue**
- A **const lvalue reference** binds to both **lvalue** and **rvalue**

```
int      x = 5;           // "x" is an lvalue
int&    r1 = x;          // "r1" is an lvalue reference
// int&  r2 = 5;          // compile error, "5" is an rvalue
const int& cr = (x * y); // "cr" is an const lvalue reference

int&&   rv = (x * y); // "rv" is an rvalue reference, "(x * y)" is an rvalue
// int&&  rv1 = x;        // compile error, "x" is NOT an rvalue
```

```
struct A {};  
  
void f(A& a) {}          // lvalue reference  
  
void g(const A& a) {} // const lvalue reference  
  
void h(A&& a) {}      // rvalue reference  
  
A a;  
f(a);      // ok, f() can modify "a"  
g(a);      // ok, f() cannot modify "a"  
// h(a);    // compile error f() does not accept lvalues  
  
// f(A{}); // compile error f() does not accept rvalues  
g(A{});    // ok, f() cannot modify the object A{}  
h(A{});    // ok, f() can modify the object A{}
```

```
#include <algorithm>
class Array { // Array Wrapper
public:
    Array() = default;

    Array(int size) : _size{size}, _array{new int[size]} {}

    Array(const Array& obj) : _size{obj._size}, _array{new int[obj._size]} {
        // EXPENSIVE COPY (deep copy)
        std::copy(obj._array, obj._array + _size, _array);
    }

    ~Array() { delete[] _array; }

private:
    int _size;
    int* _array;
};
```

```
#include <vector>

int main() {
    std::vector<Array> vector;
    vector.push_back( Array{1000} ); // call push_back(const Array&)
}                                         // expensive copy
```

Before C++11: `Array{1000}` is created, passed by const-reference, copied, and then destroyed

Note: `Array{1000}` is no more used outside `push_back`

After C++11: `Array{1000}` is created, and moved to `vector` (fast!)

Class prototype with support for *move semantic*:

```
class X {  
public:  
    X();                      // default constructor  
  
    X(const X& obj);        // copy constructor  
  
    X(X&& obj);            // move constructor  
  
    X& operator=(const X& obj); // copy assign operator  
  
    X& operator=(X&& obj);   // move assign operator  
  
    ~X();                   // destructor  
};
```

Move constructor semantic

```
X(X&& obj);
```

- (1) *Shallow copy of obj data members (in contrast to deep copy)*
- (2) *Release any obj resources and reset all data members (pointer to nullptr, size to 0, etc.)*

Move assignment semantic

```
X& operator=(X&& obj);
```

- (1) *Release any resources of this*
- (2) *Shallow copy of obj data members (in contrast to deep copy)*
- (3) *Release any obj resources and reset all data members (pointer to nullptr, size to 0, etc.)*
- (4) *Return *this*

Move constructor

```
Array(Array&& obj) {
    _size      = obj._size; // (1) shallow copy
    _array     = obj._array; // (1) shallow copy
    obj._size  = 0;         // (2) release obj (no more valid)
    obj._array = nullptr;   // (2) release obj
}
```

Move assignment

```
Array& operator=(Array&& obj) {
    delete[] _array;          // (1) release this
    _size      = obj._size;   // (2) shallow copy
    _array     = obj._array;  // (2) shallow copy
    obj._array = nullptr;    // (3) release obj
    obj._size  = 0;          // (3) release obj
    return *this;            // (4) return *this
}
```

std::move

C++11 provides the method `std::move` (`<utility>`) to indicate that an object may be “moved from”

It allows to efficient transfer resources from an object to another one

```
#include <vector>

int main() {
    std::vector<Array> vector;
    vector.push_back( Array{1000} );      // call "push_back(Array&&)"

    Array arr{1000};
    vector.push_back( arr );            // call "push_back(const Array&)"

    vector.push_back( std::move(arr) ); // call "push_back(Array&&)"
                                    // efficient!
                                    // "arr" is not more valid here
}
```

Move Semantic Notes

If an object requires the *copy constructor/assignment*, then it should also define the *move constructor/assignment*. The opposite could not be true

The *defaulted move constructor/assignment* `=default` recursively applies the move semantic to its *base class* and *data members*.

Important: *it does not release the resources.* It is very dangerous for classes with manual resource management

```
// Suppose: Array(Array&&) = default;
Array x{10};
Array y = std::move(x); // call the move constructor
// "x" calls ~Array() when it is out of scope, but now the internal pointer
// "_array" is NOT nullptr -> double free or corruption!!
```

Move Semantic and Code Reuse

Some operations can be expressed as a function of the move semantic

```
A& operator=(const A& other) {
    *this = A{other}; // copy constructor + move assignment
    return *this;
}

void init(... /* any parameters */) {
    *this = A{...}; // user-declared constructor + move assignment
}
```

Class Declaration Semantic - Compiler Implicit

Special Members

compiler implicitly declares

| | default constructor | destructor | copy constructor | copy assignment | move constructor | move assignment |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Nothing | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted |
| Any constructor | not declared | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted |
| default constructor | user declared | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted |
| destructor | defaulted | user declared | defaulted | defaulted | not declared | not declared |
| copy constructor | not declared | defaulted | user declared | defaulted | not declared | not declared |
| copy assignment | defaulted | defaulted | defaulted | user declared | not declared | not declared |
| move constructor | not declared | defaulted | deleted | deleted | user declared | not declared |
| move assignment | defaulted | defaulted | deleted | deleted | not declared | user declared |

Class Declaration Semantic

| User-declared Entity | Meaning / Implications |
|--|---|
| non- <code>static const</code> members | <i>Copy/Move constructors</i> are not trivial (not provided by the compiler). <i>Copy/move assignment</i> is not supported |
| reference members | <i>Copy/Move constructors/assignment</i> are not trivial (not provided by the compiler) |
| destructor | The resource management is not trivial. <i>Copy constructor/assignment</i> is very likely to be implemented |
| copy constructor/assignment | Resource management is not trivial. <i>Move constructors/assignment</i> need to be implemented by the user |
| move constructor/assignment | There is an efficient way to move the object. <i>Copy constructor/assignment</i> cannot fall back safely to <i>copy constructors/assignment</i> , so they are deleted |

Universal Reference and Perfect Forwarding

The `&&` syntax has two different meanings depending on the context it is used

- **rvalue reference**
- **Universal reference**: Either **rvalue reference** or **lvalue reference**

Universal references (also called *forwarding references*) are **rvalues** that appear in a type-deducing context. `T&&`, `auto&&` accept any expression regardless it is an **lvalue** or **rvalue** and preserve the `const` property

```
void f1(int&& t) {} // rvalue reference

template<typename T>
void f2(T&& t) {} // universal reference

int&& v1 = ...; // rvalue reference
auto&& v2 = ...; // universal reference
```

```
int      f_copy();
int&    f_ref();
const int& f_const_ref();

auto      c1  = f_copy();           // lvalue, T=int
// auto      c2  = f_ref();          // compile error
auto      c3  = f_const_ref();    // lvalues (decay), T=int
// auto&   r1  = f_copy();          // compile error
auto&    r2  = f_ref();           // lvalue ref, T=int&
// auto&   r3  = f_const_ref();    // compile error
const auto& cr1 = f_copy();      // not modifiable, T=const int&
const auto& cr2 = f_ref();       // not modifiable, T=const int&
const auto& cr3 = f_const_ref(); // not modifiable, T=const int&
auto&&   u1  = f_copy();          // T=int&
auto&&   u2  = f_ref();           // T=int&
auto&&   u3  = f_const_ref();    // not modifiable, T=const int&
```

```
struct A {};
void f1(A&& a) {} // rvalue only

template<typename T>
void f2(T&& t) {} // universal reference

A a;
f1(A{}); // ok
// f1(a); // compile error (only rvalue)
f2(A{}); // universal reference
f2(a); // universal reference

A&& a2 = A{}; // ok
// A&& a3 = a; // compile error (only rvalue)
auto&& a4 = A{}; // universal reference
auto&& a5 = a; // universal reference
```

Universal Reference - Misleading Cases

```
template<typename T>
void f(std::vector<T>&&) {} // rvalue reference

template<typename T>
void f(const T&&)        // rvalue reference (const)

const auto&& v = ...;      // const rvalue reference
```

Reference Collapsing Rules

Before C++11 (C++98, C++03), it was not allowed to take a reference to a reference (`A& &` causes a compile error)

C++11, by contrast, introduces the following **reference collapsing rules**:

```
template<typename T>
void f(T&) {} // compile error in C++98/03 (with gcc),
               // no errors in C++11 (and clang with C++98/03)
int a = 3;    //
f<int&>(a); //
```

| Type | Reference | Result |
|------|-----------|--------|
| A& | & | → A& |
| A& | && | → A& |
| A&& | & | → A& |
| A&& | && | → A&& |

Perfect Forwarding

Perfect forwarding allows preserving argument *value category* and *const/volatile* modifiers

`std::forward` (`<utility>`) forwards the argument to another function with the *value category* it had when passed to the calling function (*perfect forwarding*)

```
#include <utility> // std::forward
template<typename T> void f(T& t) { cout << "lvalue"; }
template<typename T> void f(T&& t) { cout << "rvalue"; } // overloading

template<typename T> void g1(T&& obj) { f(obj); } // call only f(T&)
template<typename T> void g2(T&& obj) { f(std::forward<T>(obj)); }

struct A{};
f( A{10} ); // print "rvalue"
g1( A{10} ); // print "lvalue"!!
g2( A{10} ); // print "rvalue"
```

Value Categories

Taxonomy (simplified)

Every expression is either an **rvalue** or an **lvalue**

- An **lvalue** (*left* value of an assignment for historical reason or *locator* value) represents an expression that occupies an *identity*, namely a memory location (it has an address)
- An **rvalue** is movable; an **lvalue** is not

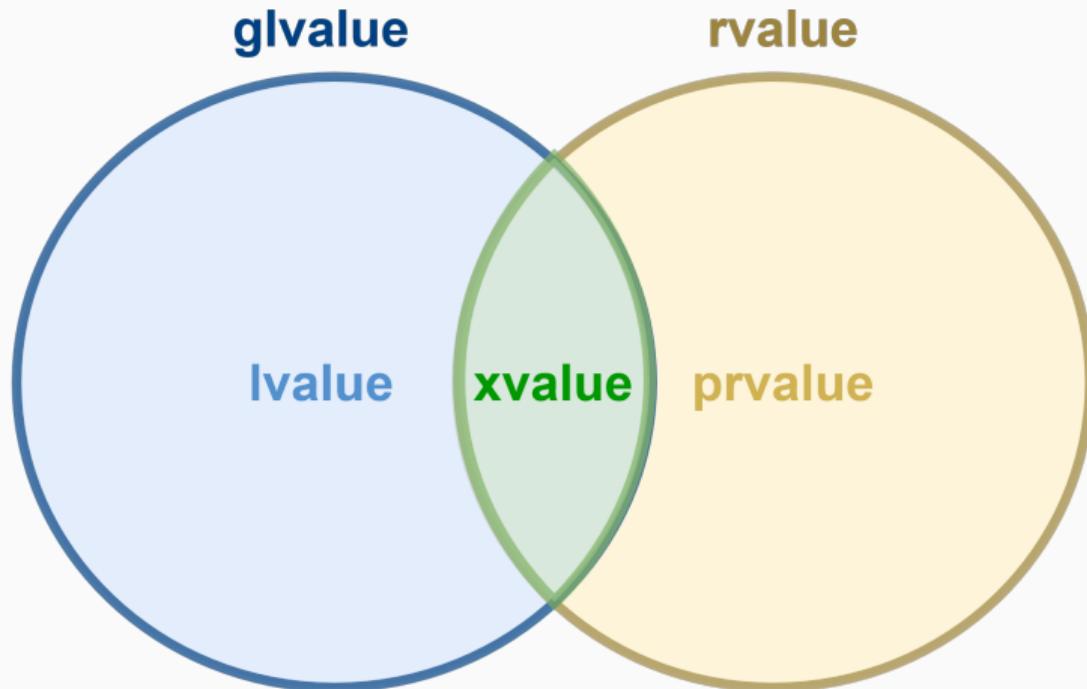
glvalue (*generalized lvalue*) is an expression that has an identity

lvalue is a **glvalue** but it is not movable (it is not an **xvalue**). An *named rvalue reference* is a **lvalue**

xvalue (*eXpiring*) has an identity and it is movable. It is a **glvalue** that denotes an object whose resources can be reused. An *unnamed rvalue reference* is a **xvalue**

prvalue (*pure rvalue*) doesn't have identity, but is movable. It is an expression whose evaluation initializes an object or computes the value of an operand of an operator

rvalue is movable. It is a **prvalue** or an **xvalue**



Examples

```
struct A {  
    int x;  
};  
  
void f(A&&) {}  
A&& g();  
//-----  
int a = 4;          // "a" is an lvalue, "4" is a rvalue  
f(A{4});           // "A{4}" is a rvalue  
  
A&& b = A{3};     // "A&& b" is a named rvalue reference → lvalue  
  
A c{4};  
f(std::move(c)); // "std::move(c)" is a xvalue  
f(A{}.x);        // "A{}.x" is a xvalue  
g();             // "A&&" is a xvalue
```

&, && Ref-qualifiers and volatile Overloading

C++11 allows overloading member functions depending on the **lvalue/rvalue** property of their object. This is also known as **ref-qualifiers overloading** and can be useful for optimization purposes, namely, moving a variable instead of copying it

```
struct A {  
    // void f() {} // already covered by "f() &"  
    void f() & {}  
    void f() && {}  
};  
  
A a1;  
a1.f();           // call "f() &"  
  
A{}.f();         // call "f() &&"  
std::move(a1).f(); // call "f() &&"
```

Ref-qualifiers overloading can be also combined with `const` methods

```
struct A {  
    // void f() const {} // already covered by "f() const &"  
    void f() const & {}  
    void f() const && {}  
};  
  
const A a1;  
a1.f();           // call "f() const &"  
  
std::move(a1).f(); // call "f() const &&"
```

A simple example where *ref-qualifiers overloading* is useful

```
struct ArrayWrapper {  
    ArrayWrapper(/*params*/) { /* something expensive */ }  
  
    ArrayWrapper copy() const & { /* expensive copy with std::copy() */ }  
    ArrayWrapper copy() const && { /* just move the pointer as the original  
        object is no more used */ }  
};
```

volatile Overloading

```
struct A {  
    void f() {}  
    void f() volatile {} // e.g. propagate volatile to data members  
    void f() const volatile {}  
    // void f() volatile & {} // combining ref-qualifier and volatile  
    // void f() const volatile & {} // overloading is also fine  
    // void f() volatile && {}  
    // void f() const volatile && {}  
};  
  
volatile A a1;  
a1.f(); // call "f() volatile"  
  
const volatile A a2;  
a2.f(); // call "f() const volatile"
```

Copy Elision and RVO/NVRO

Copy Elision and RVO/NVRO

Copy elision is a compiler optimization technique that eliminates unnecessary *creation, destruction, copying, and moving* of temporary objects

Copy elision can be also applied to avoid *unnecessary object copies when returning objects* from functions. Such optimizations are:

- **RVO (Return Value Optimization)** means the compiler is allowed to avoid creating *temporary* objects for return values
- **NRVO (Named Return Value Optimization)** means the compiler is allowed to return an object (with automatic storage duration) without invoking copy/move constructors

RVO Example

Returning an object from a function is *very expensive* without RVO/NVRO:

```
struct Obj {
    Obj() = default;

    Obj(const Obj&) { // non-trivial
        cout << "copy constructor\n";
    }
};

Obj f() { return Obj{}; } // first copy

auto x1 = f();           // second copy (create "x")
```

If provided, the compiler uses the *move constructor* instead of *copy constructor*

RVO - Where it works

RVO Copy elision is always guaranteed if the operand is a **prvalue** of the same class type and the *copy constructor* is trivial and non-deleted

```
struct Trivial {  
    Trivial()             = default;  
    Trivial(const Trivial&) = default;  
};  
  
// single instance  
Trivial f1() {  
    return Trivial{}; // Guarantee RVO  
}  
  
// distinct instances and run-time selection  
Trivial f2(bool b) {  
    return b ? Trivial{} : Trivial{}; // Guarantee RVO  
}
```

Guaranteed Copy Elision (C++17)

In C++17, *RVO Copy elision* is always guaranteed if the operand is a prvalue of the same class type, even if the *copy constructor* is not trivial or deleted

```
struct S1 {
    S1()          = default;
    S1(const S1&) = delete; // deleted
};

struct S2 {
    S2()          = default;
    S2(const S2&) {}           // non-trivial
};

S1 f() { return S1{}; }
S2 g() { return S2{}; }

auto x1 = f(); // compile error in C++14
auto x2 = g(); // RVO only in C++17
```

NRVO is not always guaranteed even in C++17

```
Obj f1() {
    Obj a;
    return a; // most compilers apply NRVO
}

Obj f2(bool v) {
    Obj a;
    if (v)
        return a; // copy/move constructor
    return Obj{}; // RVO
}
```

GCC 14 adds the flag `-Wnvro` to diagnose when NVRO is not possible

- New C++ features in GCC 14
- Improving Copy and Move Elision (Visual Studio 2022 version 17.4 Preview 3)

RVO Example - Where it does NOT work

2/3

```
Obj f3(bool v) {
    Obj a, b;
    return v ? a : b;      // copy/move constructor
}

Obj f4() {
    Obj a;
    return std::move(a); // force move constructor
}

Obj f5() {
    static Obj a;
    return a;             // only copy constructor is possible
}
```

RVO Example - Where it does NOT work

3/3

```
Obj f6(Obj& a) {
    return a; // copy constructor (a reference cannot be elided)
}

Obj f7(const Obj& a) {
    return a; // copy constructor (a reference cannot be elided)
}

Obj f8(const Obj a) {
    return a; // copy constructor (a const object cannot be elided)
}

Obj f9(Obj&& a) {
    return a; // copy constructor (the object is instantiated in the function)
}
```

Type Deduction

Type Deduction

When you call a template function, you may omit any template argument that the compiler can determine or deduce (inferred) by the usage and context of that template function call [IBM]

- The compiler tries to deduce a template argument by comparing the type of the corresponding template parameter with the type of the argument used in the function call
- Similar to function default parameters, (any) template parameters can be deduced only if they are at end of the parameter list

Full Story: IBM Knowledge Center

Example

```
template<typename T>
int add1(T a, T b) { return a + b; }

template<typename T, typename R>
int add2(T a, R b) { return a + b; }

template<typename T, int B>
int add3(T a) { return a + B; }

template<int B, typename T>
int add4(T a) { return a + B; }

add1(1, 2);      // ok
// add1(1, 2u);    // the compiler expects the same type
add2(1, 2u);    // ok (add2 is more generic)
add3<int, 2>(1); // "int" cannot be deduced
add4<2>(1);     // ok
```

Type Deduction - Pass by-Reference

Type deduction with references

```
template<typename T>
void f(T& a) {}

template<typename T>
void g(const T& a) {}

int      x = 3;
int&    y = x;
const int& z = x;

f(x);   // T: int
f(y);   // T: int
f(z);   // T: const int // <-- !! it works...but it does not
g(x);   // T: int      //      for "f(int& a)"!!
g(y);   // T: int      //      (only non-const references)
g(z);   // T: int      // <-- note the difference
```

Type deduction with pointers

```
template<typename T>
void f(T* a) {}

template<typename T>
void g(const T* a) {}

int*      x = nullptr;
const int* y = nullptr;
auto      z = nullptr;

f(x);    // T: int
f(y);    // T: const int
// f(z); // compile error, z: "nullptr_t != T*"
g(x);    // T: int
g(y);    // T: int    <-- note the difference
// g(z); // compile error, z: "nullptr_t != T*"
```

```
template<typename T>
void f(const T* a) {} // pointer to const-values

template<typename T>
void g(T* const a) {} // const pointer

int*           x = nullptr;
const int*     y = nullptr;
int* const    z = nullptr;
const int* const w = nullptr;

f(x);    // T: int
f(y);    // T: int
f(z);    // T: int
g(x);    // T: int
g(y);    // T: const int
g(z);    // T: int
g(w);    // T: const int
```

Type deduction with values

```
template<typename T>
void f(T a) {}

template<typename T>
void g(const T a) {}

int      x = 2;
const int y = 3;
const int& z = y;

f(x);    // T: int
f(y);    // T: int!! (drop const)
f(z);    // T: int!! (drop const&)
g(x);    // T: int
g(y);    // T: int
g(z);    // T: int!! (drop reference)
```

```
template<typename T>
void f(T a) {}

int*      x = nullptr;
const int* y = nullptr;
int* const z = x;
f(x);    // T = int*
f(y);    // T = const int*
f(z);    // T = int* !! (const drop)
```

Type Deduction - Array

Type deduction with arrays

```
template<typename T, int N>
void f(T (&array)[N]) {}    // type and size deduced

template<typename T>
void g(T array) {}

int      x[3] = {};
const int y[3] = {};

f(x);    // T: int, N: 3
f(y);    // T: const int, N: 3
g(x);    // T: int*
g(y);    // T: const int*
```

```
template<typename T>
void add(T a, T b) {}

template<typename T, typename R>
void add(T a, R b) {}

template<typename T>
void add(T a, char b) {}

add(2, 3.0f);           // call add(T, R)
add(2, 3);              // call add(T, T)
add<int>(2, 3);        // call add(T, T)
add<int, int>(2, 3);   // call add(T, R)
add(2, 'b');            // call add(T, char) -> nearest match
```

```
template<typename T, int N>
void f(T& array) {}

template<typename T>
void f(T* array) {}

int x[3];
template<typename T, int N>
void g(T& array) {}

template<typename T>
void g(T array) {}

int x[3];
g(x); // call g(T) not g(T&) !!
```

auto Deduction

- `auto x =` copy by-value/by-const value
- `auto& x =` copy by-reference/by-const-refernce
- `auto* x =` copy by-pointer/by-const-pointer
- `auto&& x =` copy by-universal reference
- `decltype(auto) x =` automatic type deduction

```
int          f1(int& x) { return x; }
int&        f2(int& x) { return x; }
auto         f3(int& x) { return x; }
decltype(auto) f4(int& x) { return x; }

int v = 3;
int x1 = f1(v);
int& x2 = f2(v);
// int& x3 = f3(v); // compile error 'x' is copied by-value
int& x4 = f4(v);
```

The problem: implement a function to remove the first element of a container

```
template<typename T>
void pop_v1(T& x) {
    std::remove(x.begin(), x.end(), x.front()); // undefined behavior!
}
```

This is *undefined behavior* because

- `x.front()` returns a reference
- `std::remove` takes the element to remove by-const-reference
- `std::remove` modifies the container, invalidating iterators and references. The reference must not be an element of the range [first, last)

Sub-optimal solutions:

```
template<typename T>
void pop_v2(T& x) {
    auto tmp = x.front();           // lvalue copy
    std::remove(x.begin(), x.end(), tmp); // ok
}
```

```
template<typename T>
void pop_v3(T& x) {
    using R = std::decay_t<decltype(x.front())>; // verbose/non-trivial solution
    std::remove(x.begin(), x.end(), R(x));          // ok, create a temporary (rvalue)
}                                                 // copy
// decltype(x.front()) -> retrieve the type of x.front()
// std::decay_t          -> get the 'decay' type as pass by-value,
//                           e.g. 'const int' to 'int'
```

C++23 introduces `auto(x)` decay-copy utility to express the rvalue copy in a clear way

```
template<typename T>
void pop_v4(T& x) {
    std::remove(x.begin(), x.end(), auto(x.front())); // ok, rvalue copy
} // equivalent to R(x)
```

const Correctness

const Correctness

const correctness refers to guarantee object/variable const consistency throughout its lifetime and ensuring safety from unintentional modifications

References:

- Isocpp: const-correctness
- GotW: Const-Correctness
- Abseil: Meaningful ‘const’ in Function Declarations
- const is a contract
- Why const Doesn’t Make C Code Faster
- Constant Optimization?

- `const` entities do not change their values at run-time. This does not imply that they are evaluated at compile-time
- `const T*` is different from `T* const`. The first case means “*the content does not change*”, while the later “*the value of the pointer does not change*”
- Pass *by-const-value* and *by-value* parameters imply the *same* function signature
- Return *by-const-value* and *by-value* have different meaning
- `const_cast` can *break* const-correctness

`const` and member functions:

- `const` member functions do not change the internal status of an object
- `mutable` fields can be modified by a `const` member function (they should not change the external view)

`const` and code optimization:

- `const` keyword purpose is for correctness (*type safety*), not for performance
- `const` may provide performance advantages in a few cases, e.g. non-trivial copy semantic

Function Declarations Example

```
void f(int);
void f(const int); // the declaration is exactly the same of
                  // "void f(int)"!!
void f(int*);
void f(const int*); // different declaration
```

```
void f(int&);
void f(const int&); // different declaration
```

```
int          f();
// const int f(); // compile error conflicting declaration
```

const Return Example

```
const int const_value = 3;

const int& f2() { return const_value; }
// int&      f1() { return const_value; } // WRONG
int         f3() { return const_value; } // ok

struct A {
    void f()          { cout << "non-const"; }
    void f() const { cout << "const";      }
};

const A getA() { return A{}; }

auto a = getA(); // "a" is a copy
a.f();           // print "non-const"

getA().f();      // print "const"
```

struct Example

```
struct A {          // struct A_const { // equal to "const A"
    int* ptr;      //     int* const ptr;
    int value;     //     const int value;
};

void f(A a) {
    a.value = 3;
    a.ptr[0] = 3;
}

void g(const A a) { // the same with g(const A&)
// a.value = 3;    // compile error
    a.ptr[0] = 3;   // "const" does not apply to the "ptr" content!!
}

A a{new int[10]};
f(a); // ok
g(a); // compile error
```

Member Functions Example

```
struct A {
    int value = 0;

    int& f1() { return value; }
    const int& f2() { return value; }

// int& f3() const { return value; } // compile error, const violation
    const int& f4() const { return value; }

    int f5() const { return value; } // ok, return by-copy
    const int f6() const { return value; } // ok, return by-copy
};
```