

Static Member Functions

How do you use the `numShips` variable, since it's `private`? That is, how do you find out how many ships exist? With a **static member function**, like this:

```
static int xFighters() { return numShips; }
```

A `static` member function can **only** access `static` data members, or call other `static` member functions. It **cannot** access regular data members or call regular member functions. If the function is defined **outside of the header**, then you **do not** repeat the keyword `static` in the definition:

```
int XFighter::xFighters() { return numShips; }
```

Place `static` member functions in the `public` section of your class and call them using the **class name** and the **scope operator**, **not** an instance and the dot operator:

```
cout << XFighter::xFighters() << endl;
```



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