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 <mark>static member function</mark>, like this:

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

A `static` member function can <mark>only</mark> access `static` data members, or call other `static` member functions. It <mark>cannot</mark> access regular data members or call regular member functions. If the function is defined <mark>outside of the header</mark>, then you <mark>do not</mark> 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**, <mark>not</mark> an instance and the dot operator:

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