C++ Fundamentals

Within this section, you can begin to understand the structure of C++ code and how to compile and execute that code. The fundamentals of C++ will teach you the necessary basics, such as using comments, variables, data types, strings and how to use C++ mathematics.

These are the building blocks of a C++ program. With them, you can form your own code, produce an output to the screen and store and retrieve data. Building a good foundation is key to mastering C++, and learning how to structure your C++ code will help you further down the line.

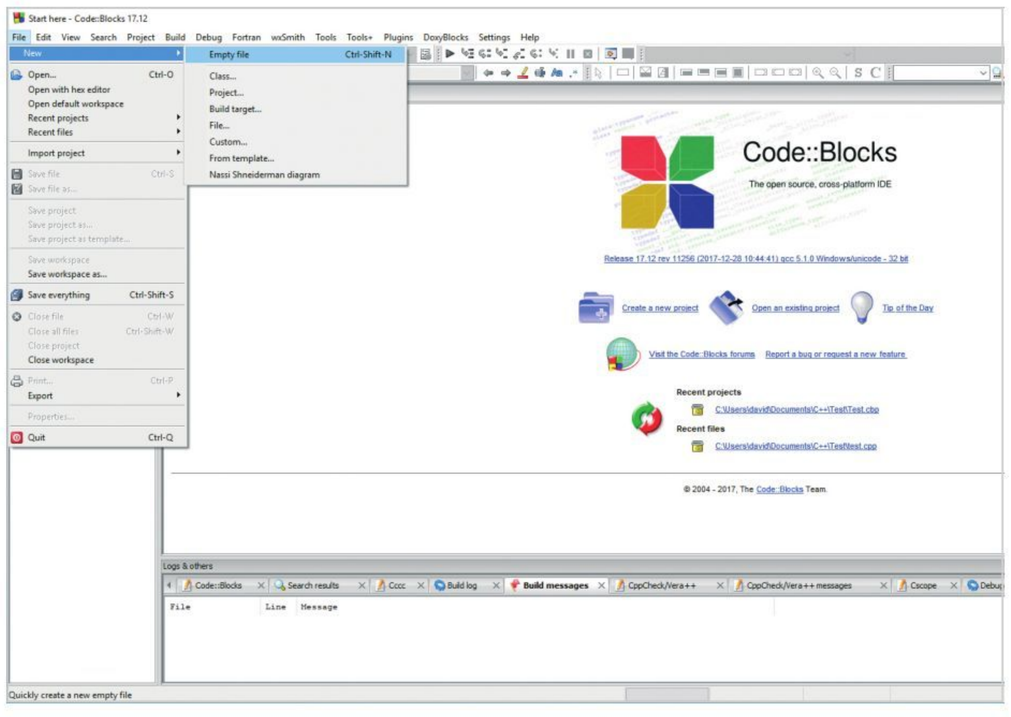
Your First C++ Program

We're going to be working exclusively in Windows with Code::Blocks for this C++ section. Let's begin by writing your first C++ program and taking the first small steps into a larger coding world.

HELLO, WORLD!

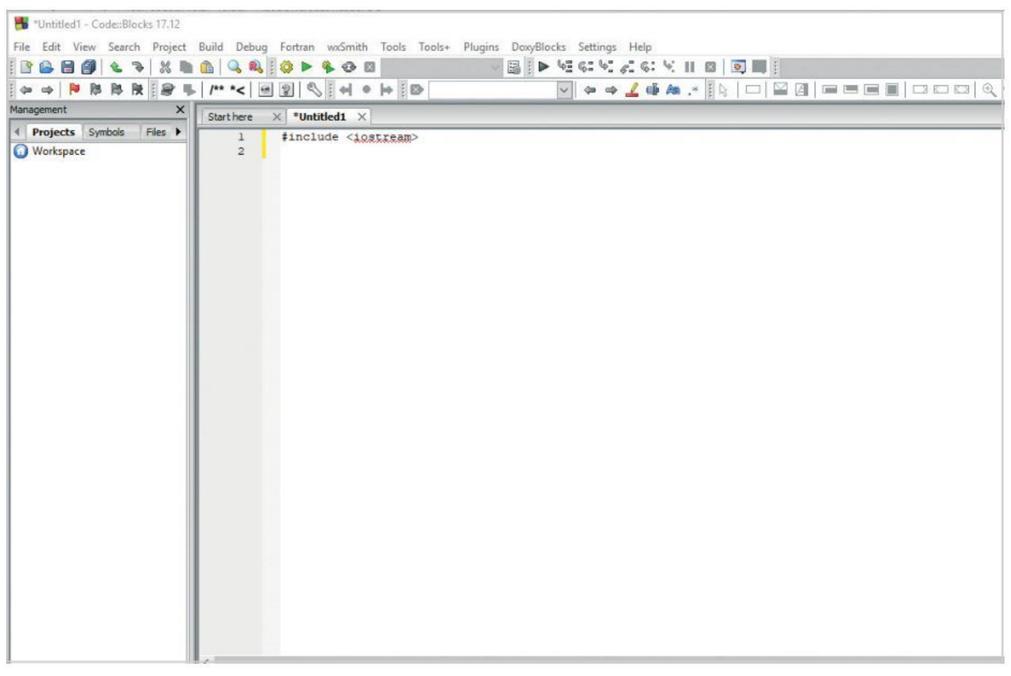
It's traditional in programming for the first code to be entered to output the words 'Hello, World!' to the screen. Interestingly, this dates back to 1968 using a language called BCPL.

STEP 1 As mentioned, we're using Windows 10 and the latest version of Code::Blocks for the rest of the C++ code in this book. Begin by launching Code::Blocks. When open, click on File > New > Empty File or press Ctrl+Shift+N on the keyboard.

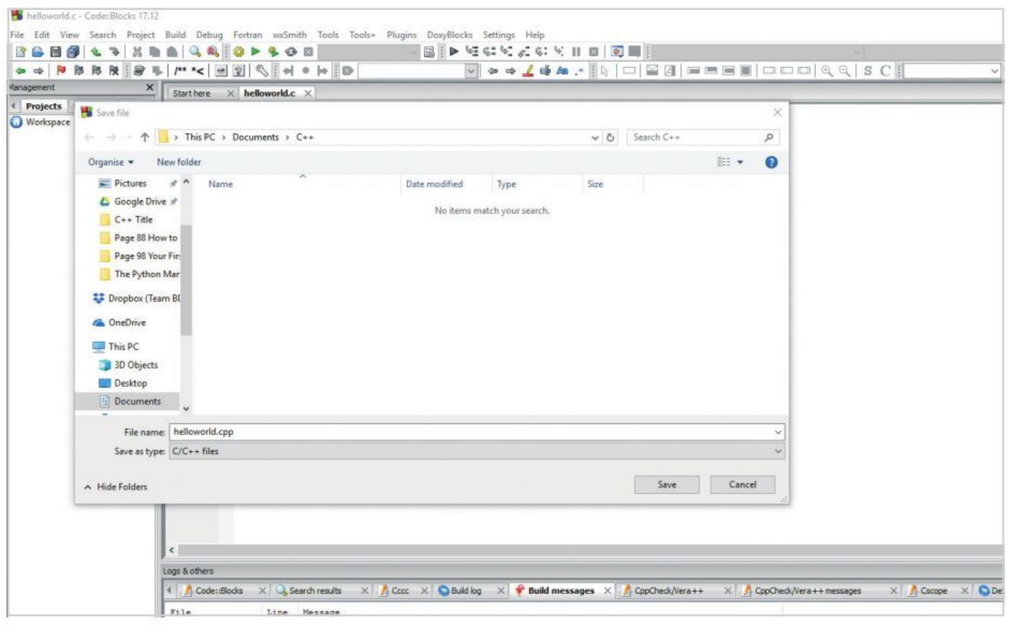


STEP 2 Now you can see a blank screen, with the tab labelled *Untitled1, and the number one in the top left of the main Code::Blocks window. Begin by clicking in the main window, so the cursor is next to the number one, and entering:

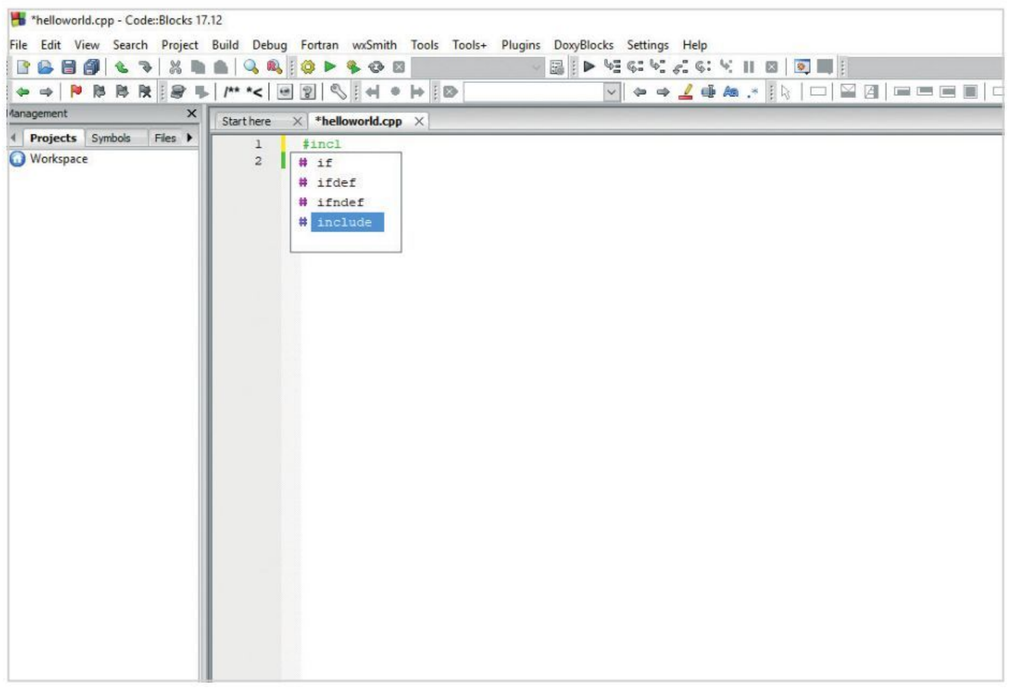
```
#include <iostream>
```



STEP 3 At the moment it doesn't look like much, and it makes even less sense, but we'll get to that in due course. Now click on File > Save File As. Create or find a suitable location on your hard drive and in the File Name box, call it helloworld.cpp. Click the Save as type box and select C/C++ files. Click the Save button.



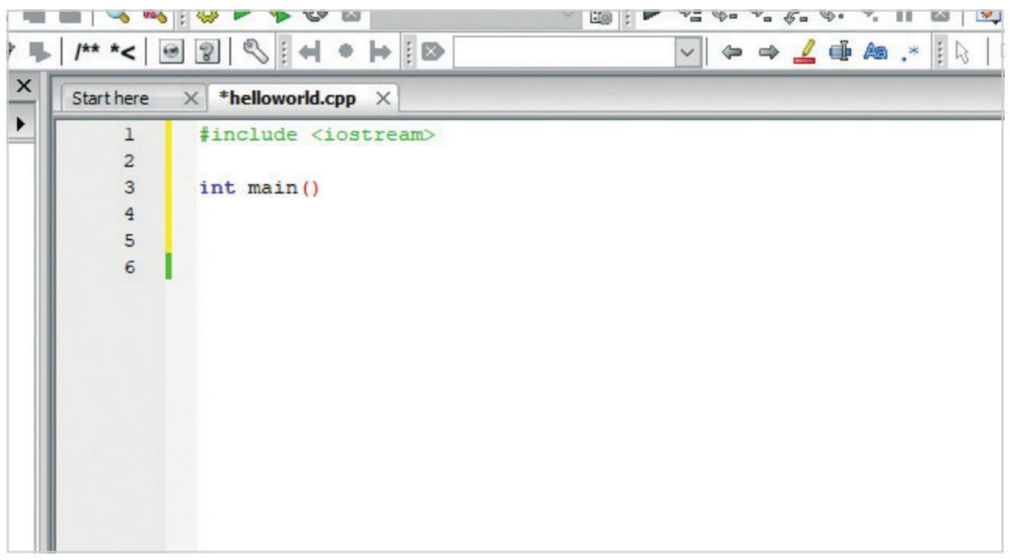
STEP 4 You can see that Code::Blocks has now changed the colour coding, recognising that the file is now C++ code. This means that code can be auto-selected from the Code::Blocks repository. Delete the #include <iostream> line and re-enter it. You can see the auto-select boxes appearing.



STEP 5 Auto-selection of commands is extremely handy and cuts out potential mistyping. Press Return to get to line 3, then enter:

```
int main()
```

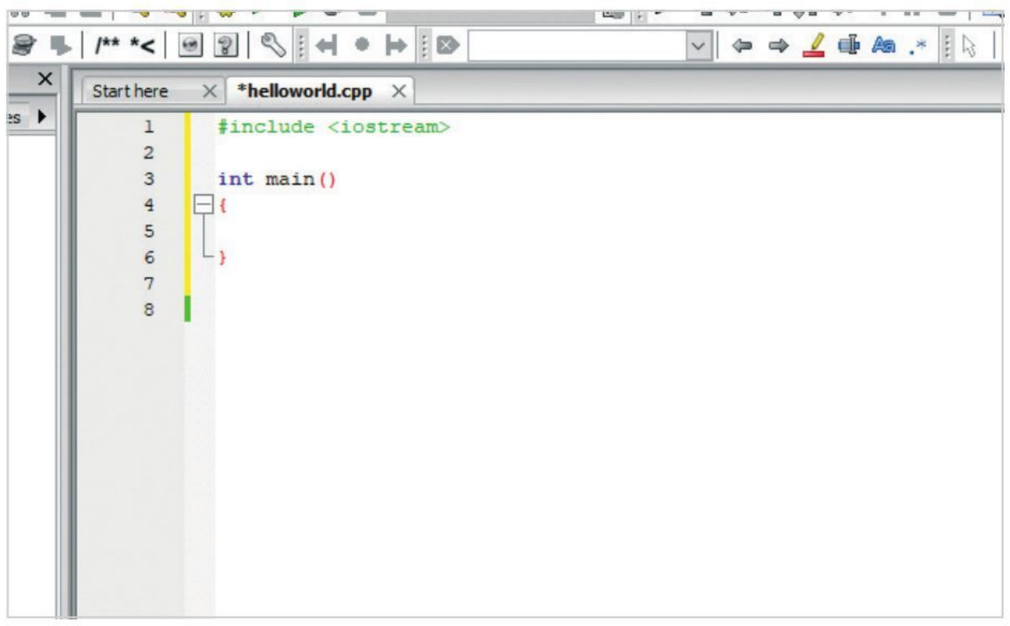
Note: there's no space between the brackets.



STEP 6 On the next line below int main(), enter a curly bracket:

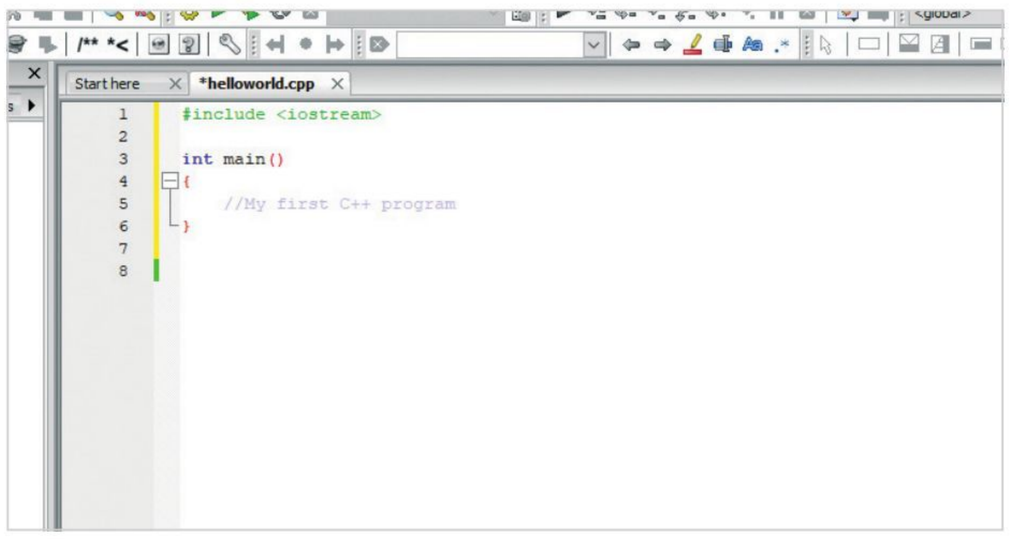
```
{
```

This can be done by pressing Shift and the key to the right of P on an English UK keyboard layout.



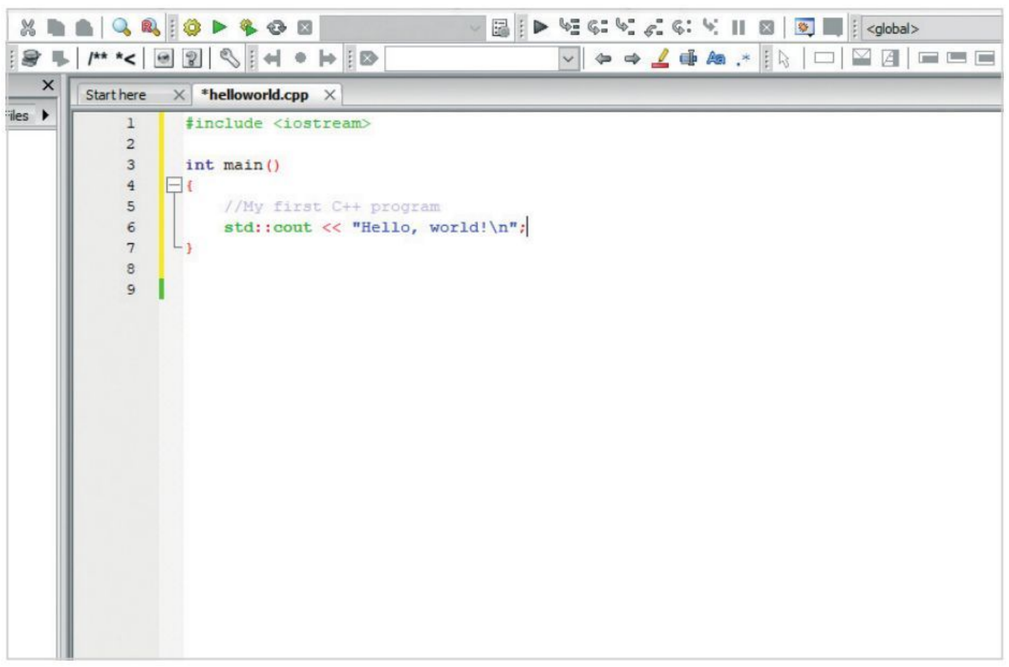
STEP 7 Notice that Code::Blocks has automatically created a corresponding closing curly bracket a couple of lines below, linking the pair, as well as a slight indent. This is due to the structure of C++ and it's where the meat of the code is entered. Now enter:

```
//My first C++ program
```

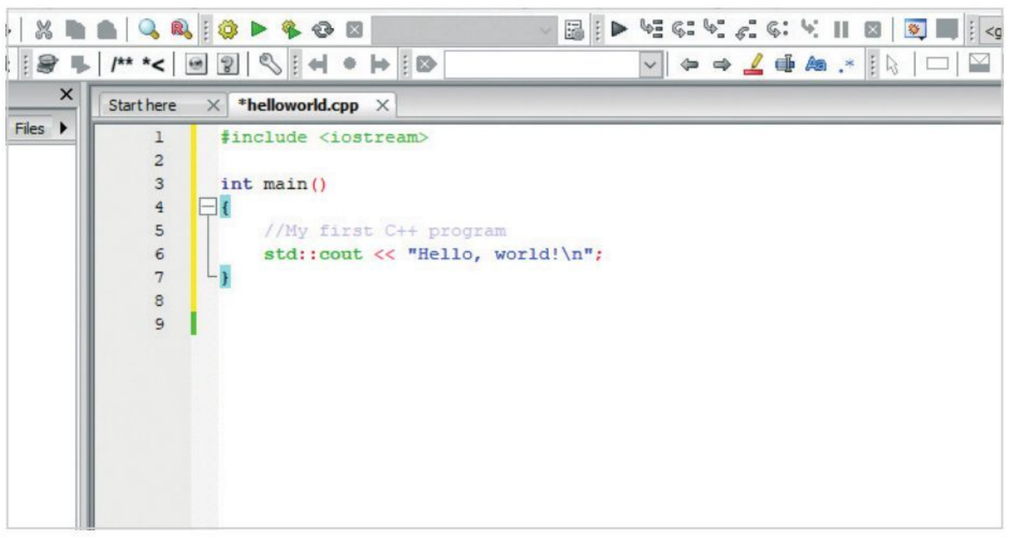


STEP 8 Note again the colour coding change. Press Return at the end of the previous step's line, and then enter:

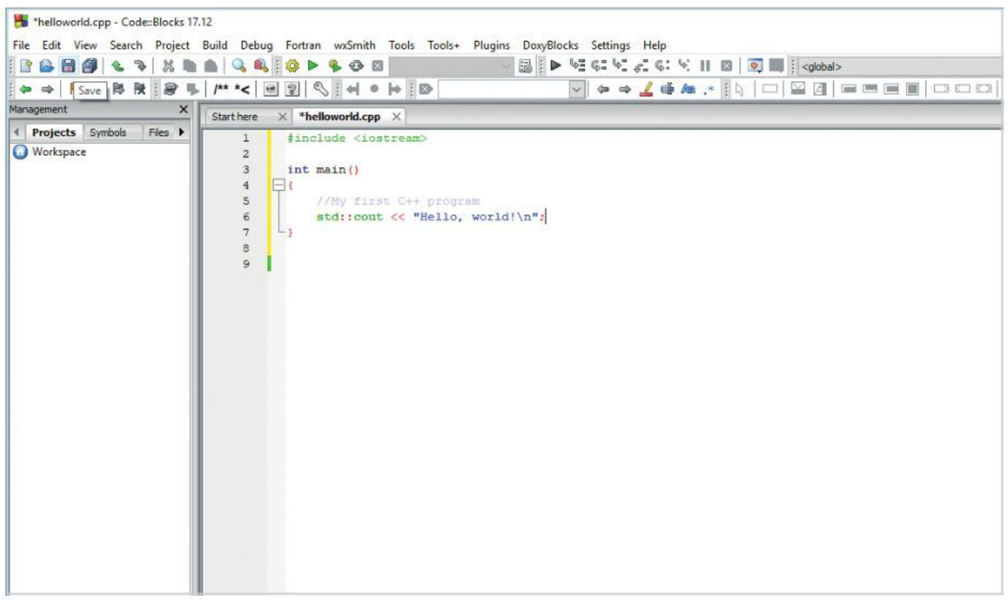
```
std::cout << "Hello, world!\n";
```



STEP 9 Just as before, Code::Blocks auto-completes the code you're entering, including placing a closing speech mark as soon as you enter the first. Don't forget the semicolon at the end of the line; this is one of the most important elements to a C++ program and we'll tell you why in the next section. For now, move the cursor down to the closing curly bracket and press Return.



STEP 10 That's all you need to do for the moment. It may not look terribly amazing but C++ is best absorbed in small chunks. Don't execute the code at the moment as you need to look at how a C++ program is structured first; then you can build and run the code. For now, click on Save, the single floppy disc icon.



Structure of a C++ Program

C++ has a very defined structure and way of doing things. Miss something out, even as small as a semicolon, and your entire program will fail to be compiled and executed. Many a professional programmer has fallen foul of sloppy structure.

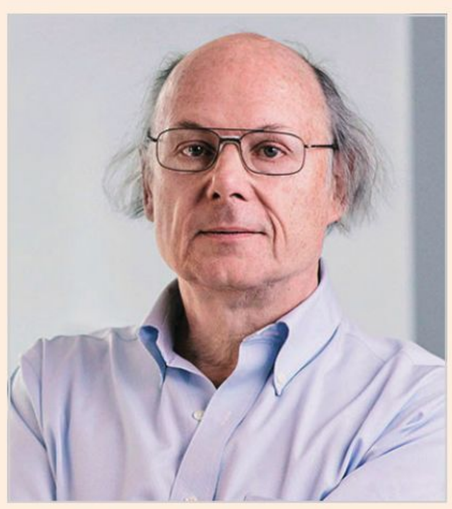
#INCLUDE <C++ STRUCTURE>

Learning the basics of programming, you begin to understand the structure of a program. The commands may be different from one language to the next, but you will start to see how the code works.

C++

C++ was invented by Danish student Bjarne Stroustrup in 1979, as a part of his Ph.D. thesis. Initially C++ was called C with Classes, which added features to the already popular C programming language, while making it a more user-friendly environment through a new structure.

Bjarne Stroustrup, inventor of C++.



#INCLUDE

The structure of a C++ program is quite precise. Every C++ code begins with a directive: **#include <>**. The directive instructs the pre-processor to include a section of the standard C++ code. For example: **#include <iostream>** includes the iostream header to support input/output operations.

Start here | *helloworld.cpp

```
1  #include <iostream>
2
3
4
5
6
```

INT MAIN()

int main() initiates the declaration of a function, which is a group of code statements under the name 'main'. All C++ code begins at the main function, regardless of where it actually lies within the code.

Start here | *helloworld.cpp

```
1  #include <iostream>
2
3  int main()
4
5
6
```

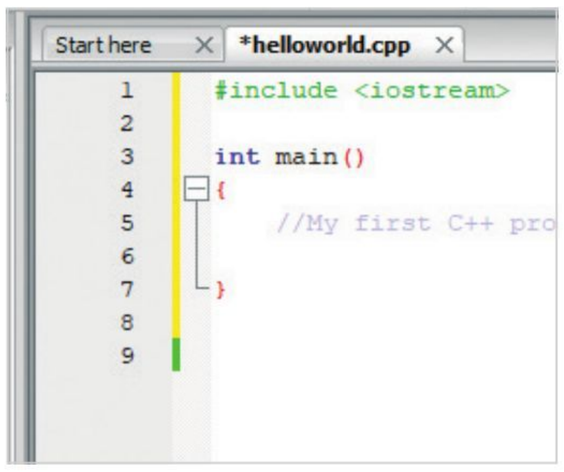
BRACES

The open brace (curly brackets) is something that you may not have come across before, especially if you're used to Python. The open brace indicates the beginning of the main function and contains all the code that belongs to that function.

```
1  #include <iostream>
2
3  int main()
4  {
5
6  }
```

COMMENTS

Lines that begin with a double slash are comments. This means they won't be executed in the code and are ignored by the compiler. Comments are designed to help you, or another programmer looking at your code, explain what's going on. There are two types of comment: /* covers multiple line comments, // a single line. Lines that begin with a double slash are comments. This means they won't be executed in the code and are ignored by the compiler. Comments are designed to help you, or another programmer looking at your code, explain what's going on. There are two types of comment: /* covers multiple line comments, // a single line.



<<

The two chevrons used here are insertion operators. This means that whatever follows the chevrons is to be inserted into the std::cout statement. In this case they're the words 'Hello, world', which are to be displayed on the screen when you compile and execute the code.

STD

While **std** stands for something quite different, in C++ it means Standard. It's part of the Standard Namespace in C++, which covers a number of different statements and commands. You can leave the **std::** part out of the code but it must be declared at the start with: **using namespace std**; not both. For example:

```
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;
```

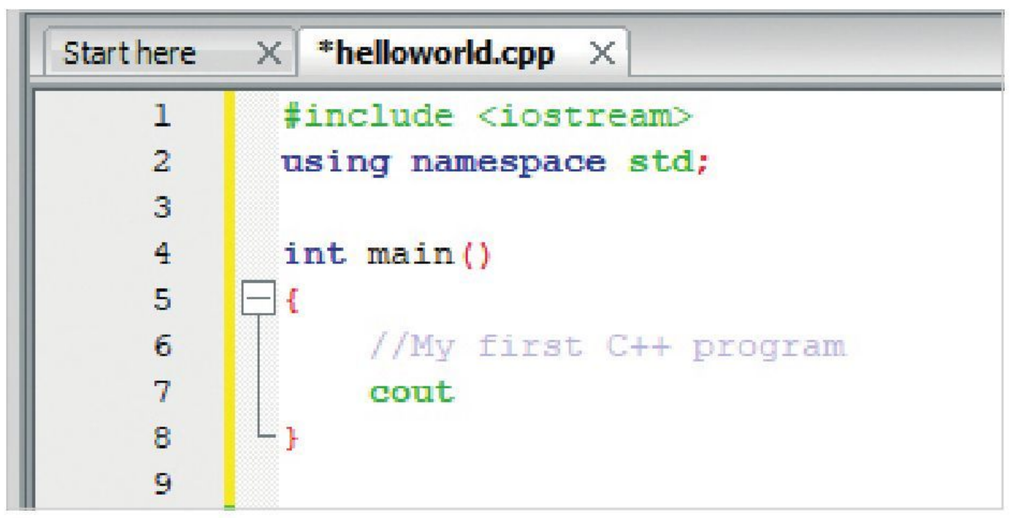
OUTPUTS

Leading on, the "Hello, world!" part is what we want to appear on the screen when the code is executed. You can enter whatever you like, as long as it's inside the quotation marks. The brackets aren't needed but some compilers insist on them. The \n part indicates a new line is to be inserted.

```
//My first C++ program
cout << "Hello, world!\n"
```

COUT

In this example we're using cout, which is a part of the Standard Namespace, hence why it's there, as you're asking C++ to use it from that particular namespace. Cout means Character OUTput, which displays, or prints, something to the screen. If we leave **std::** out we have to declare it at the start of the code, as mentioned previously.



; AND }

Finally you can see that lines within a function code block (except comments) end with a semicolon. This marks the end of the statement and all statements in C++ must have one at the end or the compiler fails to build the code. The very last line has the closing brace to indicate the end of the main function.

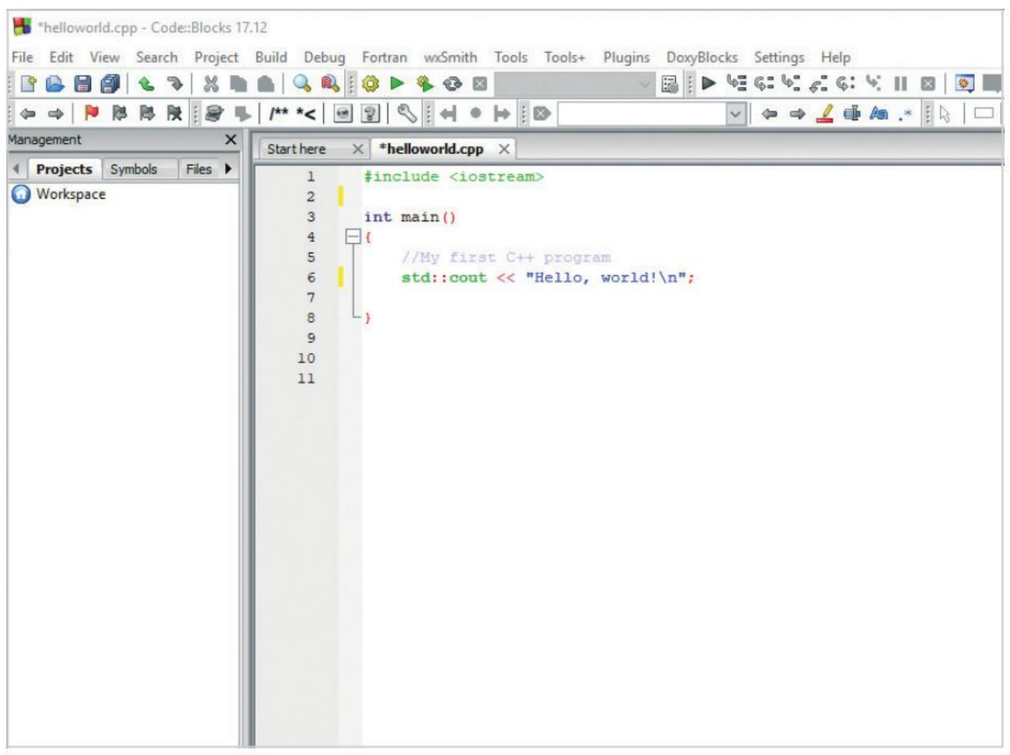
Compile and Execute

You've created your first C++ program and you now understand the basics behind the structure of one. Let's actually get things moving and compile and execute, or run if you prefer, the program and see how it looks.

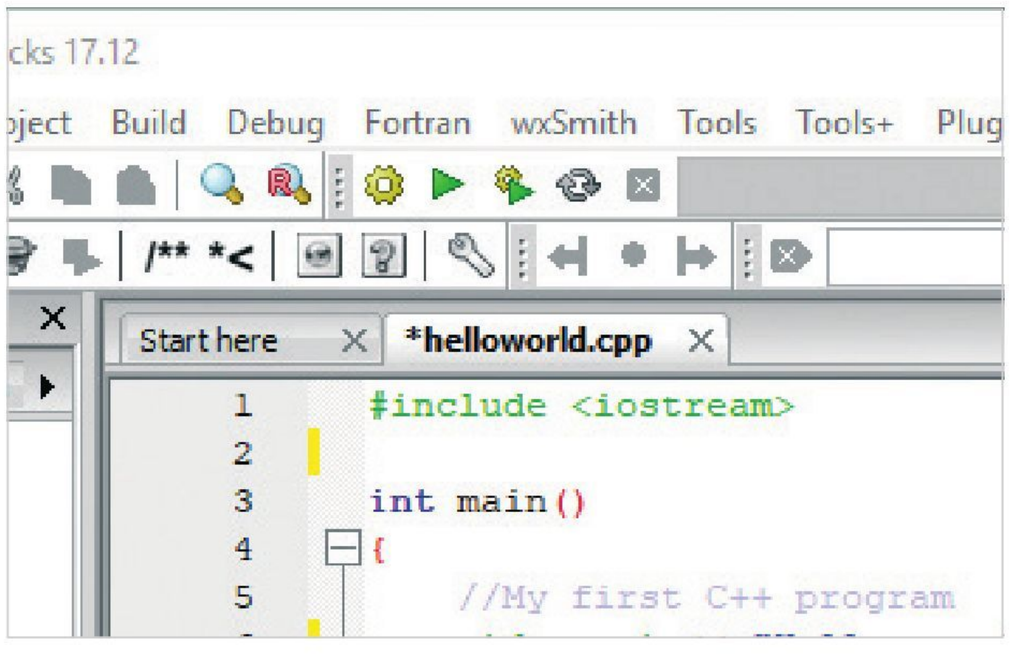
GREETINGS FROM C++

Compiling and executing C++ code from Code::Blocks is extraordinarily easy; just a matter of clicking an icon and seeing the result. Here's how it's done.

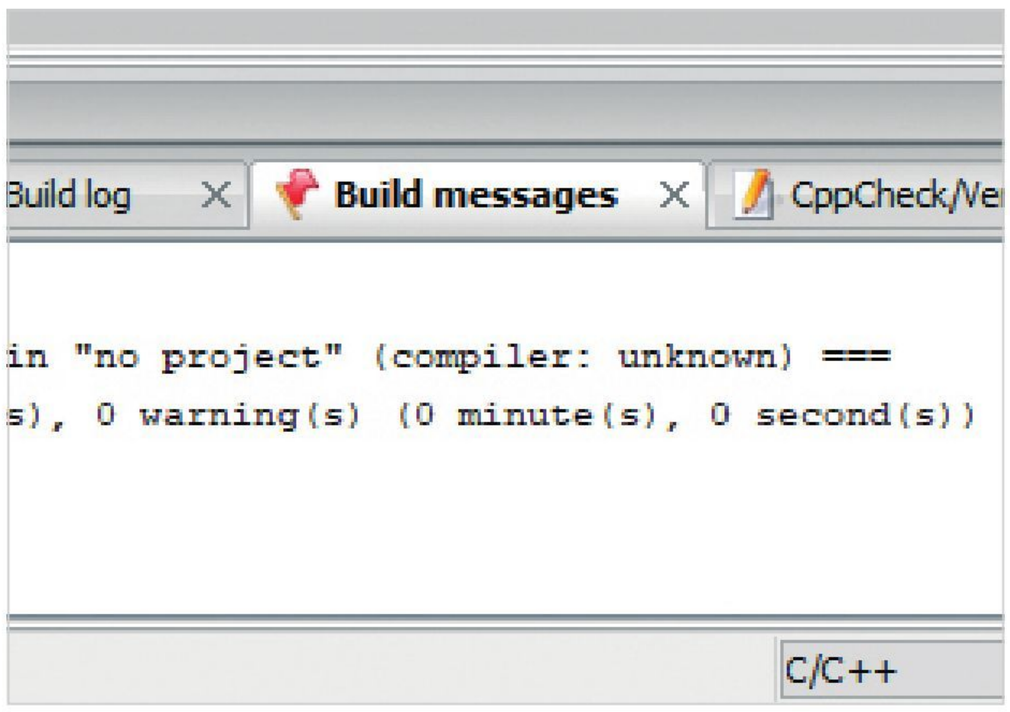
STEP 1 Open Code::Blocks, if you haven't already, and load up the previously saved Hello World code you created. Ensure that there are no visible errors, such as missing semicolons at the end of the std::cout line.



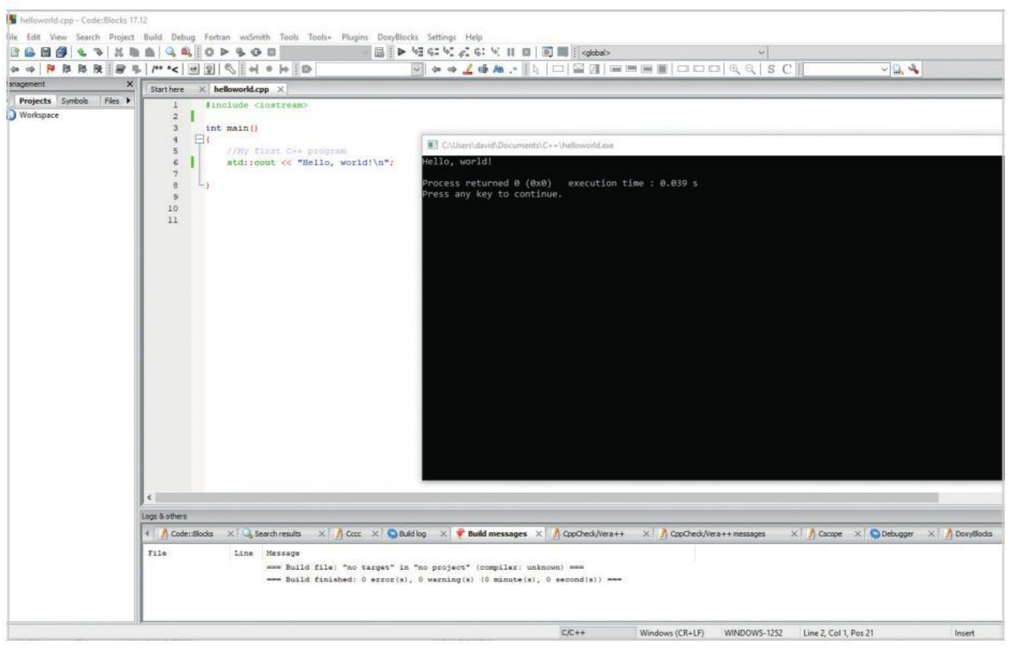
STEP 2 If your code is looking similar to the one in our screenshot, then look to the menu bar along the top of the screen. Under the Fortran entry in the topmost menu you can see a group of icons: a yellow cog, green play button and a cog/play button together. These are Build, Run, Build and Run functions.



STEP 3 Start by clicking on the Build icon, the yellow cog. At this point, your code has now been run through the Code::Blocks compiler and checked for any errors. You can see the results of the Build by looking to the bottom window pane. Any messages regarding the quality of the code are displayed here.



STEP 4 Now click on the Run icon, the green play button. A command line box appears on your screen displaying the words: Hello, world!, followed by the time it's taken to execute the code, and asking you press a key to continue. Well done, you just compiled and executed your first C++ program.

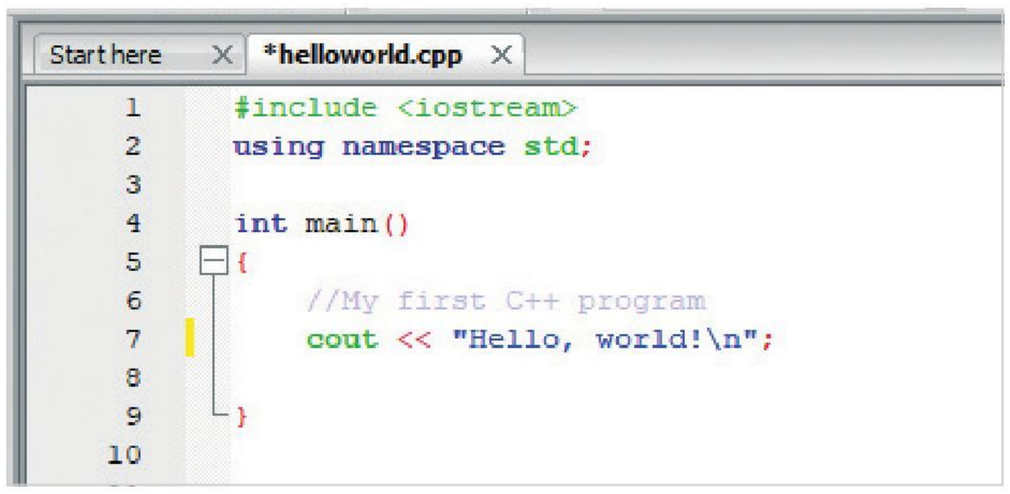


STEP 5 Pressing any key in the command line box closes it, returning you to Code::Blocks. Let's alter the code slightly. Under the #include line, enter:

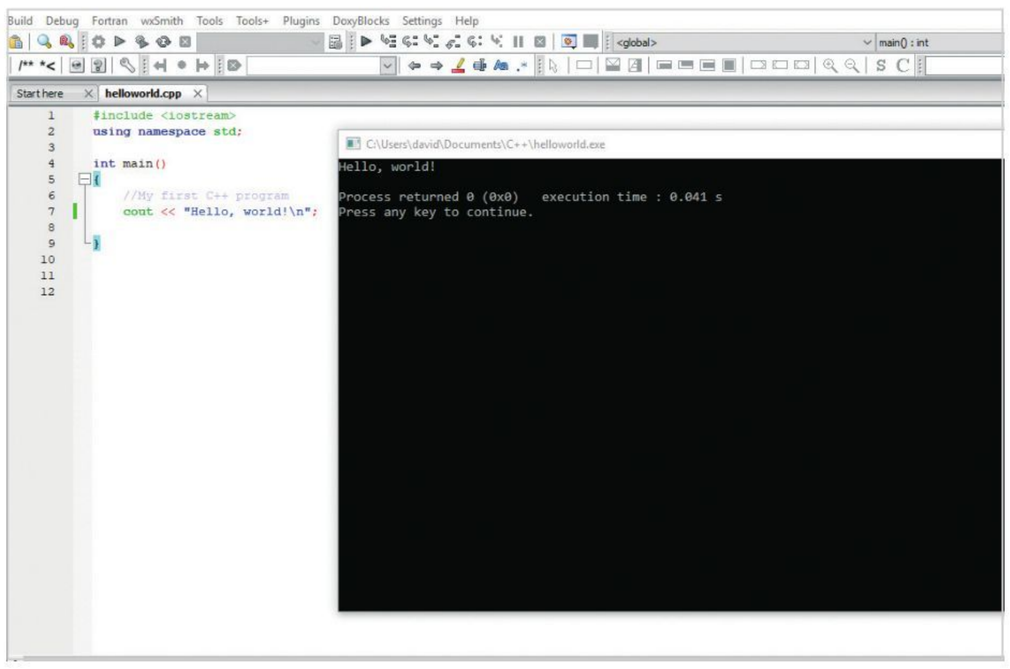
```
using namespace std;
```

Then, delete the std:: part of the Cout line; like so:

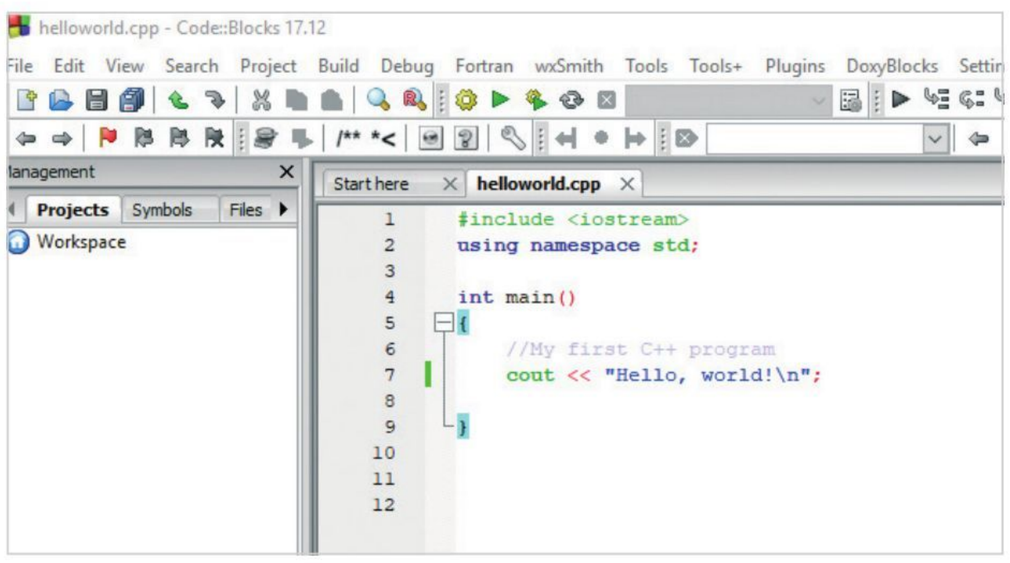
```
cout << "Hello, world\n";
```



STEP 6 In order to apply the new changes to the code, you need to re-compile, build, and run it again. This time, however, you can simply click the Build/Run icon, the combined yellow cog and green play button.

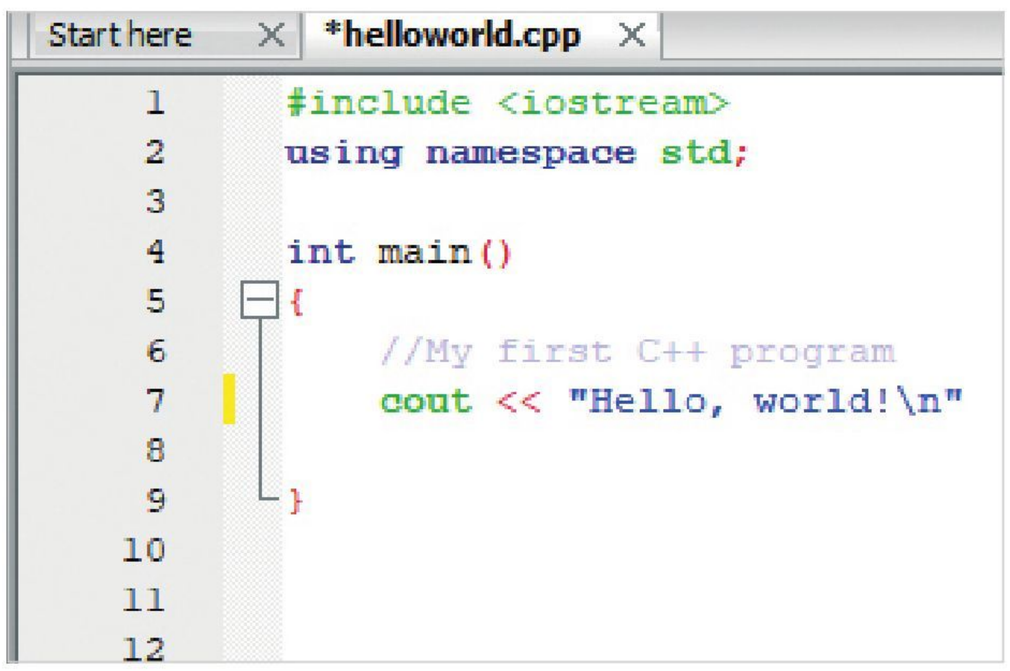


STEP 7 Just as we mentioned in the previous pages, you don't need to have std::cout if you already declare using namespace std; at the beginning of the code. We could have easily clicked the Build/Run icon to begin with but it's worth going through the available options. You can also see that by building and running, the file has been saved.

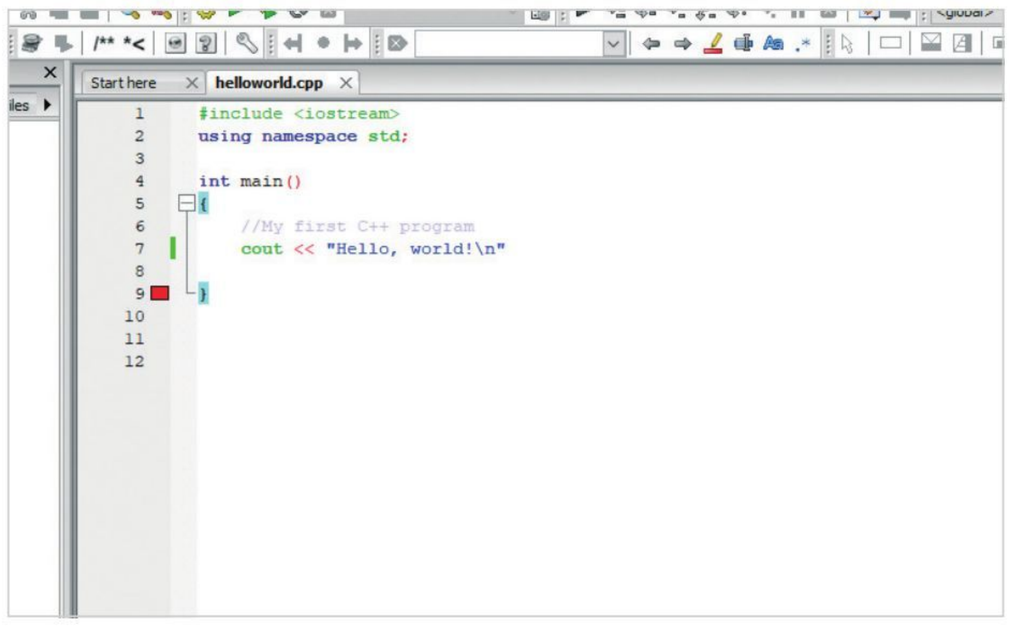


STEP 8 Create a deliberate error in the code. Remove the semicolon from the cout line, so it reads:

```
cout << "Hello, world!\n"
```



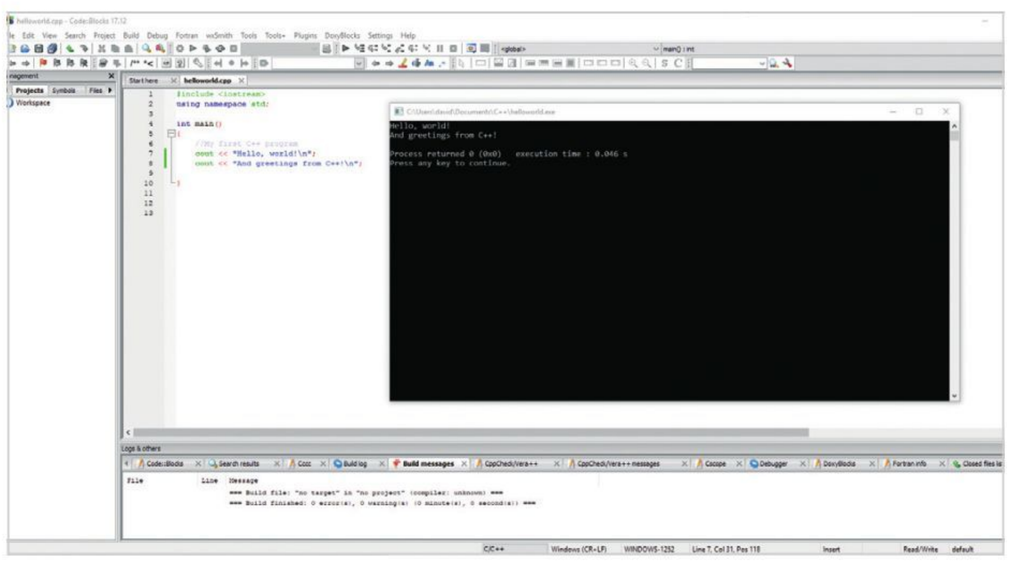
STEP 9 Now click the Build and Run icon again to apply the changes to the code. This time Code::Blocks refuses to execute the code, due to the error you put in. In the Log pane at the bottom of the screen you are informed of the error, in this case: Expected ';' before '}' token, indicating the missing semicolon.



STEP 10 Replace the semicolon and under the cout line, enter a new line to your code:

```
cout << "And greetings from C++!\n";
```

The \n simply adds a new line under the last line of outputted text. Build and Run the code, to display your handiwork.



Using Comments

While comments may seem like a minor element to the many lines of code that combine to make a game, application or even an entire operating system, in actual fact they're probably one of the most important factors.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMENTING

Comments inside code are basically human readable descriptions that detail what the code is doing at that particular point. They don't sound especially important but code without comments is one of the many frustrating areas of programming, regardless of whether you're a professional or just starting out.

In short, all code should be commented in such a manner as to effectively describe the purpose of a line, section, or individual elements. You should get in to the habit of commenting as much as possible, by imagining that someone who doesn't know anything about programming can pick up your code and understand what it's going to do simply by reading your comments.

In a professional environment, comments are vital to the success of the code and ultimately, the company. In an organisation, many programmers work in teams alongside engineers, other developers, hardware analysts and so on. If you're a part of the team that's writing a bespoke piece of software for the company, then your comments help save a lot of time should something go wrong, and another team member has to pick up and follow the trail to pinpoint the issue.

Place yourself in the shoes of someone whose job it is to find out what's wrong with a program. The program has in excess of 800,000 lines of code, spread across several different modules. You can soon appreciate the need for a little help from the original programmers in the form of a good comment.

The best comments are always concise and link the code logically, detailing what happens when the program hits this line or section. You don't need to comment on every line. Something along the lines of: if x==0 doesn't require you to comment that if x equals zero then do something; that's going to be obvious to the reader. However, if x equalling zero is something that drastically changes the program for the user, such as, they've run out of lives, then it certainly needs to commented on.

Even if the code is your own, you should write comments as if you were going to publicly share it with others. This way you can return to that code and always understand what it was you did or where it was you went wrong or what worked brilliantly.

Comments are good practise and once you understand how to add a comment where needed, you soon do it as if it's second nature.

```
        DEFB    26h,30h,32h,26h,30h,32h,0,0,32h,72h,73h,32h,72h,73h,32h
        DEFB    60h,61h,32h,4Ch,4Dh,32h,4Ch,99h,32h,4Ch,4Dh,32h,4Ch,4Dh
        DEFB    32h,4Ch,99h,32h,5Bh,5Ch,32h,56h,57h,32h,33h,0CDh,32h,33h
        DEFB    34h,32h,33h,34h,32h,33h,0CDh,32h,40h,41h,32h,66h,67h,64h
        DEFB    66h,67h,32h,72h,73h,64h,4Ch,4Dh,32h,56h,57h,32h,80h,0CBh
        DEFB    19h,80h,0,19h,80h,81h,32h,80h,0CBh,0FFh
T858C:
        DEFB    80h,72h,66h,60h,56h,66h,56h,56h,51h,60h,51h,51h,56h,66h
        DEFB    56h,56h,80h,72h,66h,60h,56h,66h,56h,56h,51h,60h,51h,51h
        DEFB    56h,56h,56h,56h,80h,72h,66h,60h,56h,66h,56h,56h,51h,60h
        DEFB    51h,51h,56h,66h,56h,56h,80h,72h,66h,60h,56h,66h,56h,40h
        DEFB    56h,66h,80h,66h,56h,56h,56h,56h
;
; Game restart point
;
START:  XOR     A
        LD      (SHEET),A
        LD      (KEMP),A
        LD      (DEMO),A
        LD      (B845B),A
        LD      (B8458),A
        LD      A,2             ;Initial lives count
        LD      (NOMEN),A
        LD      HL,T845C
        SET     0,(HL)
        LD      HL,SCREEN
        LD      DE,SCREEN+1
        LD      BC,17FFh        ;Clear screen image
        LD      (HL),0
        LDIR
        LD      HL,0A000h       ;Title screen bitmap
        LD      DE,SCREEN
        LD      BC,4096
        LDIR
        LD      HL,SCREEN + 800h + 1*32 + 29
        LD      DE,MANDAT+64
        LD      C,0
        CALL    DRWFIX
        LD      HL,0FC00h       ;Attributes for the last room
        LD      DE,ATTR         ;(top third)
        LD      BC,256
        LDIR
        LD      HL,09E00h       ;Attributes for title screen
        LD      BC,512          ;(bottom two-thirds)
        LDIR
        LD      BC,31
        DI
        XOR     A
R8621:
        IN      E,(C)
        OR      E
        DJNZ    R8621   ;$-03
        AND     20h
        JR      NZ,R862F ;$+07
        LD      A,1
        LD      (KEMP),A
R862F:
        LD      IY,T846E
        CALL    C92DC
        JP      NZ,L8684
        XOR     A
        LD      (EUGHGT),A
```

C++ COMMENTS

Commenting in C++ involves using a double forward slash '/', or a forward slash and an asterisk, '/*'. You've already seen some brief examples but this is how they work.

STEP 1 Using the Hello World code as an example, you can easily comment on different sections of the code using the double forward slash:

```
//My first C++ program
cout << "Hello, world!\n";
```

```
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n";


}
```

STEP 2 However, you can also add comments to the end of a line of code, to describe in a better way what's going on:

```
cout << "Hello, world!\n"; //This line outputs the words 'Hello, world!'. The \n denotes a new line.
```

Note, you don't have to put a semicolon at the end of a comment. This is because it's a line in the code that's ignored by the compiler.

```
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n"; //This line outputs the words 'Hello, world!'. The /


}
```

STEP 3 You can comment out several lines by using the forward slash and asterisk:

```
/* This comment can
     cover several lines
     without the need to add more slashes */
```

Just remember to finish the block comment with the opposite asterisk and forward slash.

```
int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n";
    cout << "And greetings from C++";

    /* This comment can
       cover several lines
       without the need to add more slashes */


}
```

STEP 4 Be careful when commenting, especially with block comments. It's very easy to forget to add the closing asterisk and forward slash and thus negate any code that falls inside the comment block.

```
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n";
    cout << "And greetings from C++";

    /* This comment can
      cover several lines
      without the need to add more slashes

    cout << "This line is now being ignored by the compiler!";


}
```

STEP 5 Obviously if you try and build and execute the code it errors out, complaining of a missing curly bracket '}' to finish off the block of code. If you've made the error a few times, then it can be time consuming to go back and rectify. Thankfully, the colour coding in Code::Blocks helps identify comments from code.

```
#include <iostream>
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n";
    cout << "And greetings from C++";

    /* This comment can
      cover several lines
      without the need to add more slashes

    cout << "This line is now being ignored by the compiler!";


}
```

STEP 6 If you're using block comments, it's good practise in C++ to add an asterisk to each new line of the comment block. This also helps you to remember to close the comment block off before continuing with the code:

```
/* This comment can
 *    cover several lines
 *    without the need to add more slashes */
```

```
int main()
{
    //My first C++ program
    cout << "Hello, world!\n";
    cout << "And greetings from C++\n";

   /* This comment can
    *    cover several lines
    *    without the need to add more slashes */


    cout << "This line is now being ignored by the compiler!\n";


}
```