

Programming with C++

COMP2011: C++ String Class

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Introduction

- **C strings** consist of a **sequence** of characters terminated by the `'\0'` character, and are stored as **char arrays**.
- **C string** is not a basic data type and does not natively support any operations which are, instead, provided by a set of functions defined in the **cstring** library.
- There is a **C++ string class** which allows you to manipulate **string objects** as if they are from a basic type.
 - *string construction and initialization*
 - *input and output*
 - *indexing*
 - *comparisons*
 - *substrings*
 - *swapping strings*
 - *string length*
 - *finding substrings and characters*
 - *replacing characters in string*
 - *inserting characters in string*

Common Public Member Functions

- `string::append`
- `string::assign`
- `string::at`
- `string::begin`
- `string::capacity`
- `string::clear`
- `string::compare`
- `string::copy`
- `string::c_str`
- `string::data`
- `string::empty`
- `string::end`
- `string::erase`
- `string::find`
- `string::find_first_not_of`
- `string::find_first_of`
- `string::find_last_not_of`
- `string::find_last_of`
- `string::insert`
- `string::length`
- `string::max_size`
- `string::operator=`
- `string::operator+=`
- `string::operator[]`
- `string::push_back`
- `string::rbegin`
- `string::rend`
- `string::replace`
- `string::resize`
- `string::rfind`
- `string::size`
- `string::substr`
- `string::swap`

Constructors

- Default constructor: To create an empty string.

```
string s; // s is ""
```

- To create a string from n copies of a character.

```
string rating(3, 'A'); // rating is "AAA"
```

- To create a string object from a C string.

```
string s1("hello");  
string s2 = "hello"; // both are "hello"
```

- To create from a substring of a C string:

```
string s("hello", 4); // s is "hell"
```

Assignment and Concatenation

- To assign one string object to another string object.

```
string s1("thank"), s2;           // s1 is "thank", s2 is ""  
s2 = s1;                          // s2 is "thank" too
```

- To assign a C string to a string object.

```
string s; s = "good";             // s is "good"
```

- To assign a character to a string object.

```
string s; s = 'A';                // s is "A"
```

- To concatenate 2 string objects.

```
string s1("thank"), s2 = "you";   // s1 is "thank", s2 is "you"  
string s3;                        // s3 is ""  
s3 = s1 + " " + s2;               // s3 is "thank you"  
s1 += s2;                         // s1 is "thankyou"
```

- To read one word into a string object.

```
string s;  
cin >> s;           // skip leading whitespaces
```

- To output a string object to the console.

```
string s = "hkust";  
cout << s;           // output "hkust" to the screen
```

- To get one line of text until a newline or other delimiter character.

```
string s;  
getline(cin, s);      // read until a newline character  
getline(cin, s, 'X');  // read until an 'X' which is not read in  
                       // but discarded. Next input starts after 'X'.
```

Accessing Individual Characters

- To get the number of characters in a string object.

```
string s = "hkust";  
cout << s.length();           // output is 5
```

- 2 ways to get the j th character of a string object.

① use the subscript operator `[]` like the C strings

- $0 \leq j \leq \text{length}() - 1$
- you don't have to worry about the terminating NULL character, which will be handled by the class.
- if the index $j > \text{length}() - 1$, the behaviour is **undefined**.

② member function `at()`

- similar to `[]`, but check if the index is valid \Rightarrow **slower**.
- **runtime error** if the index is **beyond** the string length.

```
string s = "hkust";  
cout << s.at(1);               // output is 'k'  
s.at(9) = 'a';                 // runtime error
```

String Comparisons

- Comparison is based on the lexicographical order.
- Comparison operators: `<`, `<=`, `>`, `>=`, `==`, `!=`
- `compare()` function: `s1.compare(s2)`
 - returns 0 if the strings are the same
 - returns a +ve number if s1 is lexicographically greater than s2
 - returns a -ve number if s1 is lexicographically smaller than s2

- `s.substr(j, N)`: To get a copy of the substring of `s` starting at the index `j`, consisting of `N` characters.

```
// index: 0123456789012345678901234567890123456789
string s = "The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain.";
string s1 = s.substr(1, 2);
string s2 = s.substr(9, 8);
string s3 = s1 + " is " + s2;
cout << s3 << endl;      // Output: he is in Spain
```

Find and Replace

- `s.find(s2, j)`: To search for the first occurrence of a substring `s2`, starting from the `j`th character of current string object `s`. It returns
 - if found, the `position` of the found substring in the string object.
 - otherwise, a constant `string::npos` = the max. unsigned int.
- `s.rfind(s2, j)`: similar to `find()` but search backwards.
- `s.replace(j, N, s2)`: To replace the substring of `s` that consists of `N` characters and starts at the `j`th character by `s2`.

Example: Find and Replace

```
#include <iostream>      /* File: sfind.cpp */
using namespace std;

int main()
{
    //index: 0123456789012345678901234567890123
    string s("The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain.");
    cout << s.length() << endl;

    int p1 = s.find("ain");    // Find the first "ain"
    int p2 = s.find("ain", 10); // First "ain" from the 10th char
    int p3 = s.find("ain", 20); // First "ain" from the 20th char
    int p4 = s.find("ain", 30); // First "ain" from the 30th char
    int p5 = s.find("ain", 50); // First "ain" from the 50th char
    cout << p1 << ' ' << p2 << ' ' << p3 << ' ' << p4 << ' ' << p5 << endl;

    s.replace(p1, 3, "hino"); cout << s << endl;
    cout << s.find("ain", 10) << endl; // First "ain" from the 10th char again
    return 0;
}
// 44
// 5 14 25 40 -1
// The rhino in Spain stays mainly in the plain.
// 15
```

Example: Find and Replace ..

```
#include <iostream>      /* File: find-replace.cpp */
using namespace std;

void print_words(const string word[], int num_words) {
    for (int j = 0; j < num_words; j++)
        cout << word[j] << endl;
}

int main() {
    string s1("et"); // substring to be replaced
    string s2("ad"); // replacing string
    const int num_words = 5;
    string word[num_words] = { "met", "deet", "pets", "eta", "set" };
    cout << "Before replacement" << endl; print_words(word, num_words);

    // Replace the first occurrence of "et" by "ad" in each word
    for (int j = 0; j < num_words; j++)
    {
        int index = word[j].find(s1, 0);
        word[j].replace(index, s1.length(), s2);
    }

    cout << "After replacement" << endl; print_words(word, num_words);
    return 0;
}
```