What does ${2:-${1}} mean in Bash?

What does the following bash snippet do exactly? ${2:-${1}}

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bash

★
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4 Answers

"Use the second argument, but if none then the first one".

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✓

`${var:-default}` evaluates to the value of `$var`, unless `$var` isn't set in which case it evaluates to the text `"default"`. `$1`, `$2`, et al are the command-line arguments to your program (or function). Putting the two together it means to return `$2` if there were two arguments passed, otherwise return `$1`.

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It means "Use the second argument if the first is undefined *or* empty, else use the first". The form "${2-${1}}" (no ':') means "Use the second if the first is not defined (but if the first is defined as empty, use it)".

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