Compound types, compound data

Michael Nowak

Texas A&M University

Notes

Overview

Notes

Overview

Review

Compound types
- References
- Pointers
- Arrays

Compound data
- Vectors

References

Notes

Basic terminology

Type: Defines a set of possible values and a set of operations for an object
Object: Memory that holds a value of a given type
Value: Set of bits in memory interpreted according to type
Variable: Named object
Declaration: Statement that gives a name to an object
Definition: Declaration that sets aside memory for an object

Notes

Types

- C++ provides a set of types
  - `bool`, `char`, `int`, `double`, etc.
  - Called `built-in types`
- C++ programmers can define new types
  - Called `user-defined types`
  - We'll get to these eventually
- The C++ standard library provides a set of types; for example,
  - `std::string` is a variable-length sequence of characters
  - `std::vector` is a collection of objects, all of which have the same type; often referred to as a `container` because it "contains" other objects

Notes

Types

- The `type` of a `variable` determines which operations are valid and what their meanings are for that `type`

- Integers and floating-point numbers
  - `cin >>` reads a number
  - `cout <<` writes
  - `+` adds
  - `+= n` increments the value by `n`
  - `++` increments by 1
  - - subtracts
  - ...
- Strings
  - `cin >>` reads a word
  - `cout <<` writes
  - `+` concatenates
  - `+= s` adds the string `s` at the end
  - `++` is a type error
  - `-` is a type error
  - ...

Notes

Declarations

- A declaration is comprised of four parts:
  - An optional specifier
    - An initial keyword that specifies some non-type attribute
    - E.x., `const`, `extern`, etc.
  - A base type
  - A declarator
    - Composed of a name and optionally some declarator operators that are either prefix or postfix; most common declarator operators include:

*	pointer	prefix
*const	constant pointer	prefix
&	reference	prefix
[]	array	postfix
()	function	postfix

    - Postfix declarator operators bind more tightly than prefix ones
  - An optional initializer

Notes

Overview

Notes

Compound types

- A `compound type` is a `type` that is defined in terms of another `type`
- C++ has several, two of which we'll cover today:
  - References
  - Pointers
- The `declarators` that we have seen so far have been composed of only names, with the type of such variables the `base type` of the `declaration`
- More complicated `declarators` specify variables with compound types that are built from the base type of the `declaration`

Notes

Overview

Review

Compound types
- References
- Pointers
- Arrays

Compound data
- Vectors

References

Notes

References

- A `reference` creates an `alias` for an `object`, allowing indirect access to that `object`
- We can bind a reference to an object by writing a `declarator` of the form `&r`, where `r` is the name being introduced; for example,

```
int i = 11
int &r = i;
```

  - The names `i` and `r` refer to the same object
- *A reference is not an object but another name for an already existing object*

Notes

References

- When declaring a `variable` of a primitive built-in type, the value of the `initializer` is copied into the `object` created
- When defining a reference to an object, we `bind` that `reference` to its `initializer`
- A reference cannot be `rebind` to some other object; because of this, all references must be `initialized`
- We cannot bind a reference to a literal:

```
int &a = 11; // error
```

  however, we are allowed to take a `const &` to it:

```
const int &i = 11; // okay
```

Notes

Overview

Notes

Pointers

- A `pointer` is a `compound type` that "points to" another `type`
- A `pointer` s `value` is `memory address` of the object to which it `points`
  - You can think of these memory addresses as a an `integer value`
- We can define a pointer by writing a `declarator` of the form `*p`, where `p` is the name being defined, for example:

```
int i = 7;

int *p = &i;
```

  - We got the address of `i` by using the address-of operator (`&`)

Notes

Pointers

- A `pointer` `points` to an `object` of a given `type`
  - E.g., a `int *` points to an `object` whose type `int`
- A `Pointer` s type determines how the memory referred to by the `pointer` s value is used
  - E.g., what a `double *` points to can be added, but not concatenated, etc.
- The `types` of the `pointer` and `object` to which it points must match (there are *two exceptions*; we will get to them later)

Notes

Pointers

- When we declare a new variable, the identifier refers to an object that is created in memory with the value specified by the initializer:

```
int i = 7;
```

```
        i
.---------------.
|       7       |
'---------------'
( 0x7ffc73fa467c)
```

- We declare a pointer to i as follows:

```
int *p = &i;
```

```
        p
.---------------.
| 0x7ffc73fa467c|
'---------------'
( 0x7ffc73fa4670)
```

Notes

Pointers

- We can visualize this relationship informally as,

```
        p                        *p
.---------------.        .---------------.
| 0x7ffc73fa467c|------->|       7       |
'---------------'        '---------------'
( 0x7ffc73fa4670)        ( 0x7ffc73fa467c)
```

- To assign the value 11 to the object identified by i indirectly through p, we would write:

```
*p = 11;
```

```
        p                        *p
.---------------.        .---------------.
| 0x7ffc73fa467c|------->|      11       |
'---------------'        '---------------'
( 0x7ffc73fa4670)        ( 0x7ffc73fa467c)
```

  - We get the object to which the pointer points by using the dereference operator (*)

Notes

Important to note:

- & and * are used both as an operator in expressions and as part of a declaration to form compound types
- Make sure that you understand that it is *the context in which these symbols are used that determines their meaning*

Notes

Overview

Notes

Arrays

- An `array` is a homogeneous sequence of objects allocated in contiguous memory; all objects are of the same type and there are no gaps between them in memory
- We can declare an array by writing a `declarator` of the form `a[d]`, where `a` is the name being introduced and `d` is its size (i.e., the `array bound`); the size:
  - specifies the number of elements and must be greater than zero;
  - is part of the array's type; and
  - must be known at compile time (must be provide as a `constant expression` or `integer literal`)
- We can default-initialize an array of built-in type inside a function (such as main) by writing

```
int arr[7];
```

  - However, each element will store an undefined value

Notes

Arrays

- We can explicitly initialize the elements of an array using list notation:

```
int arr[]{0,1,2};
```

  - We can omit the size when we use explicit initialization: the compiler can infer size from the number of initializers
  - Had we provided a size, the number of initializers could not have exceeded that size
  - If the size is greater than the number of initializers provided, the initializers are used for the first elements and any remaining elements are zero-value initialized

Notes

Arrays

- We can access the elements of an array using subscripting `[idx]`, where `idx` is the index of the element of interest
  - They are indexed from 0 to `size`-1
- Arrays are not self-describing:
  - The number of elements of an array is not guaranteed to be stored within the array
  - Frequently, a terminator is used to denote whether the end of the array has been reached
  - Most C++ implementations offer no range checking for arrays

Notes

Arrays and pointers

- Normally we obtain a pointer to an object using the address-of operator
  - We can apply the address of operator to any object, including the elements in the array
- When we use an array, the compiler automatically substitutes a pointer to the first element
- In fact, the array subscripting operation `arr[idx]` is defined as `*(arr+idx)`
  - The result of adding an integral value to a pointer is itself a pointer
  - Therefore, the expression `(arr+idx)` calculates the address `idx` elements from the base of the array
  - The application of the dereference operator at that address then give you the object at that location in the array

Notes

Overview

Notes

Overview

Notes

`vectors`

- A `vector`, like the array, is a homogeneous sequence of objects allocated in contiguous memory
- A `vector`:
  - can hold an arbitrary number of elements up to whatever physical memory and the operating system can handle;
  - can grow past its declared size using its `push_back()` function;
  - can start empty and grow as data is added to it using its `push_back()` function;
  - has range-checking when you access elements using its `at(idx)` function, where `idx` is the index of the element of interest
  - always knows its own size, which is obtainable through its `size()` function
- For these reasons and others, prefer `vector` for storing elements over an array (and any other container for that matter) unless you have a good reason not to

Notes

Overview

Notes

References

- Lippman, B., Lajoie, Josee, & Moo, B. E. (2016). *C++ primer* (5th ed.). Addison-Wesley.
- Stroustrup, B. (2014). *Programming: principles and practice using C++* (2nd ed.). Addison-Wesley.

Notes

Notes

Notes