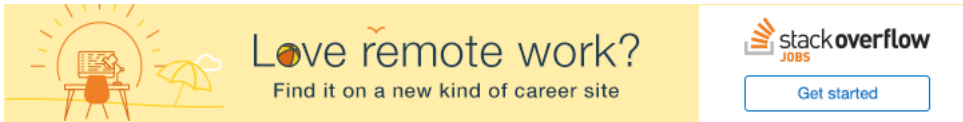


## Usage of \b and \r in C



\b and \r are rarely used in practice. I just found out that I misunderstood these two escape sequences. A simple test:

```
printf("foo\bbar\n");
```

I expected it to output `foobar`, because \b will backspace the cursor, and b will overwrite the second o, but instead it outputs: `foobar`

The same is with \r :

```
printf("foo\rbar\n");
```

I thought \r will move the cursor to the beginning of the current line, so bar will replace foo, so the final output should be `bar`. However, it actually outputs:

```
foo
bar
```

c

asked Jun 21 '13 at 13:17



Yu Hao

84.9k 20 121 180

5 Where's the question? – Chris Jun 21 '13 at 13:19

what platform are you on? – suspectus Jun 21 '13 at 13:20

@Chris what does \b and \r do exactly? – Yu Hao Jun 21 '13 at 13:20

stackoverflow.com/questions/6792812/... – ctn Jun 21 '13 at 13:21

4 @YuHao They don't do anything. They're just characters. But whatever you write those characters to might act a certain way when it receives those characters. e.g. if you write those characters to a file, the character will end up in the file. If you write it to a terminal/console, the terminal might erase a character when it sees the \b Some terminals would do that, some would not. – nos Jun 21 '13 at 13:22

### 3 Answers

The characters will get send just like that to the underlying output device (in your case probably a terminal emulator).

It is up to the terminal's implementation then how those characters get actually displayed. For example, a bell (\a) could trigger a beep sound on some terminals, a flash of the screen on others, or it will be completely ignored. It all depends on how the terminal is configured.

answered Jun 21 '13 at 13:23



ComicSansMS

21.1k 1 52 88

2 do you know how to configure mine so it doesnt ignore the bell(\a) ?? – m\_f\_ Jun 21 '13 at 13:42



The characters are exactly as documented - \b equates to a character code of 0x08 and \r equates to 0x0d. The thing that varies is how your OS reacts to those characters. Back when displays were trying to emulate an old teletype those actions were standardized, but they are less useful in modern environments and compatibility is not guaranteed.

answered Jun 21 '13 at 13:25



Mark Ransom

183k 23 202 410

2 The standard doesn't say what the character codes are. \b will be 0x08 only if 0x08 corresponds to the backspace character in the execution character set (which is true in ASCII and Unicode and other common character sets). If your execution character set is EBCDIC, however, then \b will map to \0x16 (if I can trust the character tables I'm finding online). – Adrian McCarthy Jun 21 '13 at 17:55

The interpretation of the backspace and carriage return characters is left to the software you use for display. A terminal emulator, when displaying \b would move the cursor one step back, and when displaying \r to the beginning of the line. If you print these characters somewhere else, like a text file, the software may choose. to do something else.

answered Jun 21 '13 at 13:28



Joni

64.4k



8



73



119

**protected** by [durren597](#) Sep 16 '15 at 15:13

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