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# Naming Conventions: What to name a boolean variable?

Asked 10 years, 1 month ago   Active 4 months ago   Viewed 88k times



I need a good variable name for a boolean value that returns false when an object is the last in a list.

58

The only decent name I can come up with is 'inFront', but I don't think that is descriptive enough.



Another choose would be 'isNotLast'. This is not good practice though (Code Complete, page 269, Use positive boolean variable names).



7

I am aware that I could change the variable definition. So true is returned when an object is the last and call the variable 'isLast', however, it would make this task easier if I had the first explanation.

[coding-style](#)

[naming-conventions](#)

asked Aug 4 '09 at 14:57



[Berek Bryan](#)

4,847   10   27   43

1   What about posting some of the code ? variables needs a context – [fabrizioM](#) Aug 4 '09 at 15:00

8   If you change the name you are treating the symptom. The root cause of this problem is the negative logic. – [starblue](#) Aug 4 '09 at 17:58

1   How about hasPredecessor/hasSuccessor to signify whether there are any items that precede/follow the current item? if (item.hasSuccessor) { blah blah blah } – user1397181 May 15 '12 at 20:41

We can't name it bool ? – [Ben Racicot](#) May 5 '15 at 23:25

## 12 Answers

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57

`isInFrontOfTheLastItem``isTowardsTheFrontOfTheList`

Maybe too wordy but they may help give you ideas.

edited Apr 28 '17 at 3:05



shashwat

5,383 7 47 82

answered Aug 4 '09 at 14:59



Bela

3,076 1 16 12

5 i think i am sold on 'isBeforeLast'...duh – [Berek Bryan](#) Aug 4 '09 at 15:05

11 Can't `isBeforeLast` be replaced with `!isLast`? – [Joe D](#) Aug 23 '10 at 20:42

29 If there can be elements *after* "Last", then why is it called "Last"? – [Joe D](#) Jan 6 '11 at 18:33

1 Correct me if I'm wrong, but shouldn't one avoid using articles in naming variables? – [Gurgadurgen](#) Jun 20 '14 at 13:36

2 @Thunder – `shouldDisplay` – [nickiaconis](#) Jun 16 '15 at 20:14



My vote would be to name it `IsLast` and change the functionality. If that isn't really an option, I'd leave the name as `IsNotLast`.

32



I agree with Code Complete (Use positive boolean variable names), I also believe that rules are made to be broken. The key is to break them only when you absolutely have to. In this case, none of the alternative names are as clear as the name that "breaks" the rule. So this is one of those times where breaking the rule can be okay.

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:14



Jeff Siver

6,771 22 30

to make it more visual: `if (isLast) {...}` ...or if it has to be inverted (*my preferred way to keep positive name*) `if (!isLast) {...}` – [Breaker222](#) Jun 21 '18 at 11:37

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17



answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:01

[marklam](#)

4,985 1 20 24

3 I was thinking along those lines. hasNext might work. – [Patrick McElhaney](#) Aug 4 '09 at 15:08



13



Personally more than anything I would change the logic, or look at the business rules to see if they dictate any potential naming.

Since, the actual condition that toggles the boolean is actually the act of being "last". I would say that switching the logic, and naming it "IsLastItem" or similar would be a more preferred method.

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:01

[Mitchel Sellers](#)

53.3k 12 100 161

2 +1. If I remember correctly, this is also the spirit of that section in Code Complete. – [Austin Salonen](#) Aug 4 '09 at 15:06



4



isPenultimateOrPrior

isBeforeEnd

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:05

[Greg](#)

14.9k 8 45 93



2



Haskell uses `init` to refer to all but the last element of a list (the inverse of `tail`, basically); would `isInInit` work, or is that too opaque?

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:03

[Meredith L. Patterson](#)

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too opaque. Anyone who doesn't know Haskell would just be confused. — Roy Leban Feb 1 '12 at 4:40

matlab and octave use `end` to designate the last item — wander95 Jun 28 '17 at 16:47

A simple semantic name would be `last`. This would allow code always positive code like:

```
2  if (item.last)
    ...
do {
    ...
} until (item.last);
```

answered Jun 13 '12 at 22:01



[Wil Moore III](#)

5,648 2 28 43

How about:

```
1  hasSiblings
   or isFollowedBySiblings (or isFollowedByItems, or isFollowedByOtherItems etc.)
   or moreItems
```

Although I think that even though you shouldn't make a habit of braking 'the rules' sometimes the best way to accomplish something may be to make an exception of the rule (Code Complete guidelines), and in your case, name the variable ***isNotLast***

edited Aug 4 '09 at 15:28

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:02



[Mike Dinescu](#)

41.3k 8 89 130

A sibling is something that has a parent in common with another sibling. There are no parents in a flat list. — John Topley Aug 4 '09 at 15:23

@John Topley: Yeah, I suppose you're right but you could argue that all items of the list are siblings and that their parent is the list itself.. I guess the `isFollowedBySiblings` could be renamed to something like `isFollowedByItems`, or `byOtherItems` or `byMoreItems` or something else. I still feel the

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▲ I would call the variable `beforeLast` .

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answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:02



[John Topley](#)

87.6k 42 183 231

▲ Two issues to think about

0

1. What is the scope of the variable (in other words: are you speaking about a local variable or a field?) ? A local variable has a narrower scope compared to a field. In particular, if the variable is used inside a relatively short method I would not care so much about its name. When the scope is large naming is more important.
2. I think there's an inherent conflict in the way you treat this variable. On the one hand you say "false when an object is the last in a list", where on the other hand you also want to call it "inFront". An object that is (not) last in the list does not strike me as (not) inFront. This I would go with `isLast`.

answered Aug 4 '09 at 15:06



[Itay Maman](#)

23.8k 8 70 107

▲ *I need a good variable name for a boolean value that returns false when an object is the last in a list.*

0

According to the most recent [PEP 8 Style Guide for Python Code](#), variable names "should be lowercase, with words separated by underscores as necessary to improve readability." Thus, you should name your variable e.g.

```
is_not_last
```

Other programming languages use the lowerCamelCase style for variables (e.g., `firstName`, `lastName`). However, Python prefers the

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Karoly Nyisztor

1,860 15 17



I'd go with isUnlast.

-4

It's short, pithy, and describes the situation perfectly!



answered Oct 1 '12 at 20:04



Watusimoto

795 1 13 29

2 That is a very unusual name and would cause most people to pause to think what it means. "Un" I think can often construe opposite, rather than just a negation. So it might mean "first", rather than "not last". Also, it's too close to "unlasting", which is a word meaning something entirely different. So, all around, a terrible choice, I think. – [jbyrd](#) Aug 8 '16 at 18:38

It's a funny name. – [Watusimoto](#) Aug 10 '16 at 19:48

18 Looking at my answer a year later, it was worth the downvote. – [Watusimoto](#) Sep 6 '17 at 4:19

4 @Watusimoto Props for humility - hope you are successfull dev – [Outside\\_Box](#) Sep 6 '17 at 12:40