

Don't Get Overloaded by Overload Sets

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2025

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iZOTOPE



Plugin Alliance



BRAINWORX

You can do it!



#include <cpp>

<https://www.incluecpp.org>

Don't get overloaded by overload sets!

C++ on Sea 2025

What is an overload set?

I don't think this is C anymore Toto...

C Functions

double **log(double);**

float **logf(float);**

long double **logl(long double);**

C Functions

double **log(double);**

float **logf(float);**

long double **logl(long double);**

C++ Overloaded Functions

```
float          std::log(float);
```

```
double         std::log(double);
```

```
long double    std::log(long double);
```

```
float          std::logf(float);
```

```
long double    std::logl(long double);
```

```
template <class Integer>  
double         std::log(Integer);
```

C++ Overloaded Functions

```
float          std::log(float);
```

```
double         std::log(double);
```

```
long double    std::log(long double);
```

```
float          std::logf(float);
```

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long double    std::logl(long double);
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double         std::log(Integer);
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C++ Overloaded Functions

```
float          std::log(float);
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```
double         std::log(double);
```

```
long double    std::log(long double);
```

```
float          std::logf(float);
```

```
long double    std::logl(long double);
```

```
template <class Integer>  
double         std::log(Integer);
```


Overloaded arguments (not return types!)

```
std::string to_string(float);
```

```
std::string to_string(double);
```

```
std::string to_string(long double);
```

```
template <class Integer>
```

```
std::string to_string(Integer);
```

Overloaded arguments (not return types!)

```
float      from_string(std::string);
```

```
double     from_string(std::string);
```

```
long double from_string(std::string);
```

```
template <class Integer>
```

```
Integer    from_string(std::string);
```

Overloaded arguments (not return types!)

```
float      from_string(std::string);
```

```
double     from_string(std::string);
```

```
long double from_string(std::string);
```

error: functions that differ only in their return type cannot be overloaded

```
template <class Integer>
```

```
Integer    from_string(std::string);
```

Overloaded arguments (not return types!)

```
float      from_string(std::string);
```

```
double     from_string(std::string);
```

```
long double from_string(std::string);
```

error: functions that differ only in their return type cannot be overloaded

```
template <class Integer>
```

```
Integer    from_string(std::string);
```

Constructor overloading

```
// empty vector
```

```
std::vector<int> v1;
```

```
// vector with 5 elements initialized to 0
```

```
std::vector<int> v2(5);
```

```
// vector with specified elements
```

```
std::vector<int> v3{10, 20, 30, 40, 50};
```


Constructor overloading

```
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std::vector<int> v2(5);
```

// vector with specified elements

```
std::vector<int> v3{10, 20, 30, 40, 50};
```

```
template <class T, class Allocator = std::allocator<T>> class vector {
public:
    // Default constructor
    constexpr vector() noexcept(noexcept(Allocator()));

    constexpr explicit vector(const Allocator&) noexcept;

    // Fill constructor
    constexpr explicit vector(std::size_t count,
                              const T& value = T(),
                              const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Range constructor
    template <class InputIt>
    constexpr vector(InputIt first, InputIt last, const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Copy constructors
    constexpr vector(const vector& other);
    constexpr vector(const vector& other, const Allocator&);

    // Move constructors
    constexpr vector(vector&& other) noexcept;
    constexpr vector(vector&& other, const Allocator&);

    // Initializer list constructor
    constexpr vector(std::initializer_list<T> init, const Allocator& = Allocator());
};
```

Constructor overloading

// empty vector

```
std::vector<int> v1{};
```

// vector with 5 elements initialized to 0

```
std::vector<int> v2(5);
```

// vector with specified elements

```
std::vector<int> v3{10, 20, 30, 40, 50};
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template <class T, class Allocator = std::allocator<T>> class vector {
public:
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    constexpr explicit vector(const Allocator&) noexcept;

    // Fill constructor
    constexpr explicit vector(std::size_t count,
                              const T& value = T(),
                              const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Range constructor
    template <class InputIt>
    constexpr vector(InputIt first, InputIt last, const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Copy constructors
    constexpr vector(const vector& other);
    constexpr vector(const vector& other, const Allocator&);

    // Move constructors
    constexpr vector(vector&& other) noexcept;
    constexpr vector(vector&& other, const Allocator&);

    // Initializer list constructor
    constexpr vector(std::initializer_list<T> init, const Allocator& = Allocator());
};
```



```
template <class T, class Allocator = std::allocator<T>> class vector {
public:
    // Default constructor
    constexpr vector() noexcept(noexcept(Allocator()));

    constexpr explicit vector(const Allocator&) noexcept;

    // Fill constructor
    constexpr explicit vector(std::size_t count,
                              const T& value = T(),
                              const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Range constructor
    template <class InputIt>
    constexpr vector(InputIt first, InputIt last, const Allocator& = Allocator());

    // Copy constructors
    constexpr vector(const vector& other);
    constexpr vector(const vector& other, const Allocator&);

    // Move constructors
    constexpr vector(vector&& other) noexcept;
    constexpr vector(vector&& other, const Allocator&);

    // Initializer list constructor
    constexpr vector(std::initializer_list<T> init, const Allocator& = Allocator());
};
```

What is an overload set?

What do you mean "set"?

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);           // option 1?  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);     // option 2?  
        void foo(long);     // option 3?  
  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

error: call to 'foo' is ambiguous

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);           // option 1?  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);     // option 2?  
        void foo(long);     // option 3?  
  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

error: call to 'foo' is ambiguous

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);    // option 3  
  
        void bar(int x) { foo((long)x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);    // option 2  
        void foo(long);  
  
        void bar(int x) { foo((char)x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);           // option 1?  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);     // option 2?  
        void foo(long);     // option 3?  
    }  
    namespace C {  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```


A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);           // option 1  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
    namespace C {  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
    namespace C {  
        void bar(int x) { foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
    namespace C {  
        void bar(int x) { A::B::foo(x); }  
    }  
}
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);
```

```
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
}
```

```
const auto& foo_t = typeid(A::foo);
```

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
}
```

```
const auto& foo_t = typeid(A::B::foo);
```

error: reference to overloaded function could not be resolved; did you mean to call it?

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);
```

```
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
}
```

```
using foo_t = decltype(A::B::foo);
```

error: reference to overloaded function could not be resolved; did you mean to call it?

A name representing a set of functions found through name lookup

```
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);
```

```
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
    }  
}
```

```
using foo_t = decltype((void (*)(char))A::B::foo);
```

How do we find an overload set?

Qualified or unqualified name lookup...

Qualified name-lookup algorithm of overload sets

If namespace scope:

1. Search current scope for name
2. Search parent scopes until name is found
3. When a name is found all overloads in that scope are included in overload set

If class scope (`C::foo(42)` or `c.foo(42)`):
only search classes and bases

Unqualified name-lookup algorithm of overload sets

1. Search current scope for name
2. Search parent scopes until name is found
3. If not found Argument dependent lookup
 - a. if arg class member, class namespace, bass class namespaces, and parent namespaces
 - b. If namespace member, namespace and parent namespaces
 - c. Built-in: no ADL

ADL

```
namespace other_namespace {  
    struct S {};  
    void foo(S);  
}  
  
namespace A {  
    void foo(int);  
  
    namespace B {  
        void foo(char);  
        void foo(long);  
        void bar() { foo(other_namespace::S{}); }  
    }  
}
```

Why ADL? Operator overloading

```
namespace N {  
    struct Foo { /* ... */ };  
    Foo operator+(const Foo&, const Foo&);  
}  
  
auto f = N::Foo{40} + N::Foo{2};
```

Why ADL? Generic programming

```
template <class T>
auto get_first(const T& x) {
    return get<0>(x);
}
```

```
template <>
auto get_first(const std::pair<int, int>& x) {
    return get<0>(x);
}
```

```
template <>
auto get_first(const boost::pair<int, int>& x) {
    return get<0>(x);
}
```

How does overload resolution work?

Finding the best match....

Selecting the “best” overload

1. Exact match

- No conversions needed
- Includes minor differences like const/volatile qualifiers

2. Promotion

- char, short, unsigned short, bool → int
- float → double

3. Standard conversion

- int → double, float, long
- pointer conversions (derived* → base*)
- etc.

4. User-defined conversion

- Conversions defined by conversion operators or constructors

5. Ellipsis (...) match

- Last resort, no type checking
- Avoid if possible in modern C++

Overload resolution

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view);  
void select_func(...);
```


Overload resolution: Exact match

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view x);  
void select_func(...);
```

```
int i = 42;  
select_func(i);    // Calls select_func(int)
```

```
short s = 42;  
select_func(s);    // Calls select_func(short)
```

Overload resolution: Promotion

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view);  
void select_func(...);
```

```
char c = 'A';    // char is promoted to int  
select_func(c);  // Calls select_func(int)
```

```
bool b = true;   // bool is promoted to int  
select_func(b);  // Calls select_func(int)
```

Overload resolution: Standard conversions

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view);  
void select_func(...);
```

```
select_func(42.0);    // Calls select_func(double)
```

```
float f = 3.14f;  
select_func(f);       // Calls select_func(double)
```

Overload resolution: User-defined conversion

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view);  
void select_func(...);  
  
// Calls select_func(std::string_view)  
// const char* const -> std::string_view  
select_fun("hello, world")
```

Overload resolution: Ellipsis

```
void select_func(int x);  
void select_func(short x);  
void select_func(double x);  
void select_func(long x);  
void select_func(std::string_view);  
void select_func(...);  
  
struct MysteryType {};  
  
auto x = MysteryType{};  
select_func(x) // Calls select_func(...)
```

Selecting the “best” overload

1. Exact match
2. Promotion
3. Standard conversion
4. User-defined conversion
5. Ellipsis (...) match

Selecting the “best” overload

-1. In classes, {} prioritizes default constructor

0. {} prioritizes std::initializer_list

1. Exact match

2. Promotion

3. Standard conversion

4. User-defined conversion

5. Ellipsis (...) match

Constructor overloading

// empty vector

```
std::vector<int> v1{};
```

// vector with 5 elements initialized to 0

```
std::vector<int> v2(5);
```

// vector with specified elements

```
std::vector<int> v3{10, 20, 30, 40, 50};
```


How does overload resolution work?

What about overloading templates?

Function template overloading

```
template <class T>  
T sqrt(T);
```

```
template <class T>  
std::complex<T> sqrt(std::complex<T>);
```

```
float sqrt(float);
```

```
void do_sqrts(std::complex<float> z) {  
    sqrt(42);  
    sqrt(3.14f);  
    sqrt(z);  
}
```

Function template overloading

1. Find all template specializations
2. Only consider "most specialized"
3. Perform overload resolution for template specializations and functions
4. function > specialization
5. otherwise error

Templates can be surprising!

```
class MaybeInt {
public:
    MaybeInt() {}

    explicit MaybeInt(int x) : m_value{x}, m_valid{true} {}

    MaybeInt(const MaybeInt&) = default;
    MaybeInt(MaybeInt&&) = default;
    MaybeInt& operator=(const MaybeInt&) = default;
    MaybeInt& operator=(MaybeInt&&) = default;

    explicit operator bool() const { return m_valid; }

    operator int() const { return m_value; }

    operator std::optional<int>() const {
        return m_valid ? m_value : std::optional<int>{};
    }

private:
    int m_value{};
    bool m_valid{false};
};
```

```
class MaybeInt {
public:
    MaybeInt() {};

    explicit operator bool() const { return m_valid; }

    operator int() const { return m_value; }

    operator std::optional<int>() const {
        return m_valid ? m_value : std::optional<int>{};
    }

private:
    int m_value{};
    bool m_valid{false};
};

MaybeInt no_value{};
assert(!no_value);

std::optional<int> maybe_has_value{no_value};
assert(!maybe_has_value);
```

```
class MaybeInt {
public:
    MaybeInt() {};

    explicit operator bool() const { return m_valid; }

    operator int() const { return m_value; }

    operator std::optional<int>() const {
        return m_valid ? m_value : std::optional<int>{};
    }

private:
    int m_value{};
    bool m_valid{false};
};

MaybeInt no_value{};
assert(!no_value);

std::optional<int> maybe_has_value{no_value};
assert(!maybe_has_value); // bool(maybe_has_value) == true
```

Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
template<class U>  
optional(const optional<U>&);
```

```
template<class U = std::remove_cv_t<T>>  
constexpr optional(U&& value);
```


Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
template<class U>  
optional(const optional<U>&);
```

```
template<class U = std::remove_cv_t<T>>  
constexpr optional(U&& value);
```

```
class MaybeInt {
public:
    MaybeInt() {};

    explicit operator bool() const { return m_valid; }

    operator int() const { return m_value; }

    operator std::optional<int>() const {
        return m_valid ? m_value : std::optional<int>{};
    }

private:
    int m_value{};
    bool m_valid{false};
};

MaybeInt no_value{};
assert(!no_value);

std::optional<int> maybe_has_value{no_value};
assert(!maybe_has_value); // bool(maybe_has_value) == true
```

Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
template<class U>  
optional(const optional<U>&);
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template<class U = std::remove_cv_t<T>>  
constexpr optional(U&& value);
```

Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
template<class U>  
optional(const optional<U>&);
```

```
template<class U = std::remove_cv_t<T>>  
constexpr optional(U&& value);
```

```
class MaybeInt {
public:
    MaybeInt() {};

    explicit operator bool() const { return m_valid; }

    operator int() const { return m_value; }

    operator std::optional<int>() const {
        return m_valid ? m_value : std::optional<int>{};
    }

private:
    int m_value{};
    bool m_valid{false};
};

MaybeInt no_value{};
assert(!no_value);

std::optional<int> maybe_has_value{no_value};
assert(!maybe_has_value); // bool(maybe_has_value) == true
```

Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
void foo(std::uint64_t); // option 1?
```

```
template <class T>  
void foo(T);           // option 2?
```

```
const int x = 42;  
foo(x);
```

Don't be surprised by templates in overload sets

```
void foo(std::uint64_t);
```

```
template <class T>  
void foo(T);           // option 2
```

```
const int x = 42;  
foo(x);
```

What about member function overload sets?

...classes are namespaces


```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(int);    // option 1?  
    void foo(double); // option 2?  
};
```

```
B1{}.foo(42);
```

```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(int);    // option 1  
    void foo(double);  
};
```

```
B1{}.foo(42);
```

Watch out for hiding!

```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(int);    // option 1?  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double); // option 2?  
};
```

```
D{}.foo(42);
```

Watch out for hiding!

```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(int);  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double); // option 2  
};
```

```
D{}.foo(42);
```

Watch out for multiple inheritance

```
struct S1 {}; struct S2 {};
```

```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(S1); // option 1?  
};
```

```
struct B2 {  
    void foo(S2); // option 2?  
};
```

```
struct D : B1, B2 {};
```

```
D{}.foo(S1{});
```

error: member 'foo' found in multiple base classes of different types

C.138: Create an overload set for a derived class and its bases with using

```
struct S1 {}; struct S2 {};
```

```
struct B1 {  
    void foo(S1); // option 1  
};
```

```
struct B2 {  
    void foo(S2);  
};
```

```
struct D : B1, B2 {  
    using B1::foo;  
    using B2::foo;  
};  
D{}.foo(S1{});
```

What about member function overload sets?

...qualified member functions

const qualified member functions

```
class DataHolder {  
public:  
    std::vector<std::byte> accessData() {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
    const std::vector<std::byte>& accessData() const {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
private:  
    std::vector<std::byte> m_data;  
};
```


const qualified member functions

```
class DataHolder {  
public:  
    std::vector<std::byte>& accessData() {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
    const std::vector<std::byte>& accessData() const {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
private:  
    std::vector<std::byte> m_data;  
};
```

ref-qualified member functions

```
class DataHolder {  
public:  
    std::vector<std::byte>& accessData() & {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
    const std::vector<std::byte>& accessData() const& {  
        return m_data;  
    }  
    std::vector<std::byte>&& accessData() && {  
        return std::move(m_data);  
    }  
private:  
    std::vector<std::byte> m_data;  
};
```

What about
volatile-qualified?

...forget about it...

Tips!

Constraining overload sets

```
struct S1 {};
```

```
struct S2 {};
```

```
struct MyComponent {  
    static void foo(S1);  
    static void foo(S2);  
};
```

F.51: Where there is a choice, prefer default arguments over overloading

```
void print(const string& s, format f = {});
```

```
//! use default format
```

```
void print(const string& s);
```

```
void print(const string& s, format f);
```

Constraining overload sets

```
inline constexpr my_printer =  
    [](std::string_view text) {  
        std::print("{}!!!\n" text);  
    };  

```

C.163: Overload only for operations that are roughly equivalent

```
//! remove obstacle from garage exit lane  
void open_gate(Gate& g);
```

```
//! open file  
void fopen(const char* name, const char* mode);
```


C.163: Overload only for operations that are roughly equivalent

```
//! remove obstacle from garage exit lane  
void open(Gate& g);
```

```
//! open file  
void open(const char* name, const char* mode ="r");
```

Users will expect the same
behavior regardless of type

Use tagged dispatch for related but different behavior

```
template<class InputIt, class T>  
InputIt find(InputIt first, InputIt last,  
             const T& value);
```

```
template<class ExecutionPolicy, class ForwardIt,  
class T>  
ForwardIt find(ExecutionPolicy&& policy,  
               ForwardIt first, ForwardIt last,  
               const T& value);
```

Use tagged dispatch for related but different behavior

```
inline constexpr  
std::execution::sequenced_policy seq { /* unspecified */ };
```

```
inline constexpr  
std::execution::parallel_policy par { /* unspecified */ };
```

```
inline constexpr  
std::execution::parallel_unsequenced_policy par_unseq {  
    /* unspecified */  
};
```

```
inline constexpr  
std::execution::unsequenced_policy unseq { /* unspecified */ };
```

Watch out for hiding virtual methods! — try to limit overloads to base class

```
struct B1 {  
    virtual void foo(int);    // option 1?  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double);        // option 2?  
};  
  
D{}.foo(42);
```

Watch out for hiding virtual methods! — try to limit overloads to bass class

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struct B1 {  
    virtual void foo(int);    // option 1?  
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struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double);        // option 2?  
};
```

```
auto d = D{};  
B1* b = &d;  
b->foo(42);
```

Watch out for hiding virtual methods! — try to limit overloads to base class

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struct B1 {  
    virtual void foo(int);    // option 1  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double);  
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auto d = D{};  
B1* b = &d;  
b->foo(42);
```


Watch out for hiding virtual methods! — try to limit overloads to base class

```
struct B1 {  
    virtual void foo(int);    // option 1?  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double);        // option 2?  
    void foo(int) override;  // option 3?  
};  
  
auto d = D{};  
B1* b = &d;  
b->foo(42);
```

Watch out for hiding virtual methods! — try to limit overloads to bass class

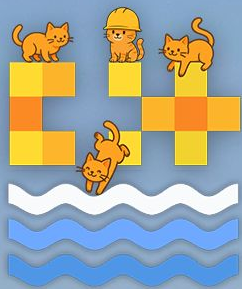
```
struct B1 {  
    virtual void foo(int);  
};  
struct D : B1 {  
    void foo(double);  
    void foo(int) override;    // option 3  
};  
  
auto d = D{};  
B1* b = &d;  
b->foo(42);
```

Overloading with value categories

	Cheap or impossible to copy (e.g., int, unique_ptr)	Cheap to move (e.g., vector<T>, string) or Moderate cost to move (e.g., array<vector>, BigPOD) or Don't know (e.g., unfamiliar type, template)	Expensive to move (e.g., BigPOD[], array<BigPOD>)
Out	X f()		
In/Out	f(X&)		
In	f(X)	f(const X&)	
In & retain copy		f(const X&) + f(X&&) & move	**
In & move from		f(X&&)	**

* or return unique_ptr<X>/make_shared_<X> at the cost of a dynamic allocation

** special cases can also use perfect forwarding (e.g., multiple in+copy params, conversions)



In Search of the Perfect Return

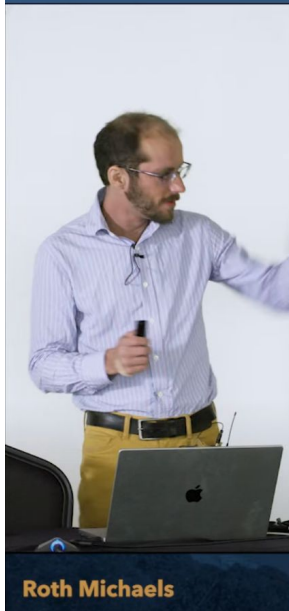
A C++ Programming Journey

Walter E Brown

2025

Function templates are recipes for function overload sets

...and are easier if you use concepts.



Roth Michaels

```
template <typename T>
class Optional {
public:

    Optional() = default;

    explicit Optional(T value)
        : m_value{value}, m_active{true} {}

    T operator*() { return m_value; }

private:
    T m_value{};
    bool m_active{false};
};
```

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wmlY5oNB4Dc>

How and When To Write a C++ Template





Thank you!

Roth Michaels

Principal Software Engineer

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[@thevibesman](#)