

CS306: Introduction to Perl

Elements of Style

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Elements of Style I

strict and warnings
Error Handling
Debugging
Documentation

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use strict

- Perl provides some ways to help you write better code – use strict is one of these.
- This is called the use strict *pragma*
- Using the strict pragma will prevent you from making lots of common mistakes

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How to use strict;

- Just add the use strict; statement at the top of your program

```
#!/usr/bin/perl  
use strict;  
...
```

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What Does use strict Prevent?

- use strict; is strict about three things
 - Thing #1: “vars” - This will complain about variables that don't meet one of these criteria
 - A Perl special variable
 - Declared with “my”
 - Some other things which we haven't talked about yet (variables from other packages)
 - So note that “vars” will prevent you from using global variables. This is why we use it!

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Example of variable strictness

- `#!/usr/bin/perl`
`use strict;`
`$foo = 1; #oops, global variable!`

use strict complains at runtime:
“Global symbol “\$foo” requires explicit package name.”

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Example of variable strictness

- `#!/usr/bin/perl`
`use strict;`
`my $foo = 1; # that's better`

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Bareword Strictness

- Thing #2: “subs” - Prevents you from using barewords where you mean to use a string

use strict;
`$str = Hello; # Oops! Bareword string`

“Bareword “hello” not allowed while “strict subs” in use”

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Bareword Strictness Continued

- use strict;
\$str = 'hello'; #better
- Also applies to function calls
use strict;
my \$result = foo; # use strict complains here too
sub foo { ... }

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Bareword Strictness Continued

- use strict;
\$str = 'hello'; #better
- Also applies to function calls
use strict;
my \$result = foo(); # now we're ok
sub foo { ... }

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Bareword Strictness Continued

- Initializing arrays and hashes
use strict;
@arr = (foo, bar); # BAD
@arr = qw/foo bar/; # OK
%hash = (foo => bar); # BAD
%hash = (foo => "bar"); # OK – values req. “ “

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use strict Summary

- These things might seem like common sense, but use strict; will also protect you from much more subtle errors down the road.
- Use it all the time, it will save you hours of debugging

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use warnings;

- Similar to use strict, but will not stop execution of the program. Just throws warnings to STDERR.
- Will warn about all sorts of things...
 - “Use of uninitialized value in addition (+)”
 - “Name "main::people" used only once: possible typo”
 - Hundreds more

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Basic Debugging with print

- When in doubt, print variables out all over the place...

```
print “Before foo(), bar is $bar\n”;  
print “In foo(), bar is $bar\n”;  
print “After foo() bar is $bar\n”;
```

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Creating a Basic Debug Mode

- Have a “global” debug flag...

```
# top of program  
my $debug = 0;  
...  
$debug && print “Before foo(), bar is $bar\n”;  
$debug && print “In foo(), bar is $bar\n”;  
print “After foo() bar is $bar\n” if $debug;
```

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Pretty Debugging with Data::Dumper

- Data::Dumper is a module that will “pretty print” a data structure
 - use Data::Dumper;

```
my %hash = (apple => 'red', banana => 'yellow');  
print Dumper(\%hash);  
  
$VAR1 = {  
  'banana' => 'yellow',  
  'apple' => 'red'  
};
```

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Data::Dumper Continued

- This will be invaluable as we build more complex data structures (hashes of hashes, multidimensional arrays, arrays of hashes of arrays of hashes of hashes of... ;-)

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Data::Dumper Continued

- use Data::Dumper;
my %hash = (apple => 'red', banana => 'yellow');
print Dumper(\%hash);
- What's the \ for? Dumper works better if you do that for arrays and hashes. It's called a reference, and we'll talk about it in a few lectures. For now, just remember to use it with arrays and hashes.

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Data::Dumper Continued

- use Data::Dumper;
my %hash = (apple => 'red', banana => 'yellow');
print Dumper(\%hash);
- Another interesting thing is happening here. Where did the Dumper() function come from? When we say “use Data::Dumper”, we get access to Dumper() for free. To be discussed later.

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Error Handling in Perl - die()

- You can use die() for the most basic, “I can't continue any further, woe is me” error handling
 - open FILE, “<\$filename” or die “Can't find the file!”;
 - chdir “/some/directory” or die “Directory not found.”;
 - die “Not enough arguments” unless @ARGV >= 2;
- The program immediately exits with your message.

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warn()

- Identical to die, except it doesn't exit the program.
- Good in loops, to warn the user that this iteration did something unexpected, but keep going through the loop

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Using Perl's Documentation

- Perl provides a lot of online documentation
- Use the 'perldoc' command to get to it
- # perldoc *module-name*
- # perldoc -f *function-name*
- # perldoc [perlfac | perlstyle | perlop | perldata | perlsub | perlrequick | perlvar | etc...]
 - many more, see "perldoc perltoc" for full list

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Style Summary

- use strict and warnings – they buy you lots of style all at once
- print statements, Data::Dumper, and a debug mode flag are usually all you need to debug
- Use error handling techniques to allow your program to act more gracefully when the unexpected happens
- The perldoc is a treasure trove, explore it

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