

Perl Library Functions

Perl has literally hundreds of functions for all kinds of purposes:

- file manipulation, database access, network programming, etc. etc.

It has an especially rich collection of functions for strings.

E.g. lc, uc, length.

Consult on-line Perl manuals, reference books, example programs for further information.

Defining Functions

Perl functions (or subroutines) are defined via `sub`, e.g.

```
sub sayHello {  
    print "Hello!\n";  
}
```

And used by calling, with or without `&`, e.g.

```
&sayHello; # arg list optional  
sayHello(); # better: show empty arg list explicitly
```

Defining Functions

Function arguments are passed via a list variable `@_`, e.g.

```
sub mySub {  
    @args = @_  
    print "I got ",@#args+1," args\n";  
    print "They are (@args)\n";  
}
```

Note that `@args` is a global variable.

To make it local, precede by `my`, e.g.

```
my @args = @_;
```

Defining Functions

Can achieve similar effect to the C function

```
int f(int x, int y, int z) {  
    int result;  
    ...  
    return result;  
}
```

by using array assignment in Perl

```
sub f {  
    my ($x, $y, $z) = @_  
    my $result;  
    ...  
    return $result;  
}
```

Defining Functions

Lists (arrays and hashes) with any scalar arguments to produce a single argument list.

This in effect means you can only pass a single array or hash to a Perl function and it must be the last argument.

```
sub good {  
    my ($x, $y, @list) = @_;
```

This will not work (x and y will be undefined):

```
sub bad {  
    my (@list, $x, $y) = @_;
```

And this will not work (list2 will be undefined):

```
sub bad {  
    my (@list1, @list2) = @_;
```

References

- are like C pointers {(refer to some other objects)}

Parameter Passing

Scalar variables are aliased to the corresponding element of @_. Allows a function to change them, this code sets x to 42.

```
sub assign {  
    $_[0] = $_[1];  
}  
assign($x, 42);
```

Arrays & hashes are passed by value.

If a function needs to change an array/hash pass a reference.

Also use references if you need to pass multiple hashes or arrays.

```
%h = (jas=>100,eric=>95,andrew=>50);  
@x = (1..10)
```

```
mySub(3, \%h, \@x);  
mysub(2, \%h, [1,2,3,4,5]);  
mysub(5, {a=>1,b=>2}, [1,2,3]);
```

Perl Prototypes

- Prototypes declare the expected parameter structure for a function.
- In other languages, main purpose of prototypes is type checking.
- The main purpose of prototypes is to allow more convenient calling of functions.
- Prototypes allow users to define functions that are called like builtins.
- Prototypes also provide some error checking - sometimes useful, sometimes less so.
- Some programmers recommend against using prototypes.
- Use in COMP(2041|9044) optional.

Perl Prototypes

Prototypes can cause a reference to be passed when an array is given as a parameter. If we define our version of push like this:

```
sub mypush {  
    my ($array_ref, @elements) = @_;  
    if (@elements) {  
        @$array_ref = (@$array_ref, @elements);  
    } else {  
        @$array_ref = (@$array_ref, $_);  
    }  
}
```

It has to be called like this:

```
mypush(\@array, $x);
```

But if we add this prototype:

```
sub mypush2(\@@)
```

It can be called just like the builtin push:

Recursive example

```
sub fac {  
    my ($n) = @_;  
  
    return 1 if $n < 1;  
  
    return $n * fac($n - 1);  
}
```

which behaves as

```
print fac(3);    # displays 6  
print fac(4);    # displays 24  
print fac(10);   # displays 3628800  
print fac(20);   # displays 2.43290200817664e+18
```

The Perl builtin function `eval` evaluates (executes) a supplied string as Perl.

For example, this Perl will print 43:

```
$perl = '$answer = 6 * 7;';
```