
Classes in C++98 and C++11

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Overview

What is a class?

Constructors & . . .

What if I don't write . . .

Why Prefer Init?

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1. Overview

- When we refer to C++98, we are referring to C++98 and C++03, since they differ only slightly.
- C++98 contained 3 types of constructors, but C++11 added a **move** constructor.
- The C++ class is one of the most difficult constructs to write correctly
- Some methods are written silently by the compiler
- Some methods are required w/ pointers
- These slides describe classes, including 3 of the 4 constructors.
- We describe **move** semantics in separate slides

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2. What is a *class*?

- Unit of encapsulation:
 - Public operations
 - Private implementation
- **Abstraction:**
 - string: abstracts char^* of C
 - student
 - sprite
- C++ Classes: easy to write, hard to get **right!**
- Need lots of examples

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2.1. The actions of a *class*

- Constructors: initialize data attributes
- Constructors: allocate memory when needed
- Destructor: De-allocate memory when necessary

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2.2. C++ *class* vs C++ *struct*

- Default access is only difference
- Generally, structs used for data
- Classes used for data and methods

Bad class	Good Class
<pre>class Student { public: string name; float gpa; };</pre>	<pre>class Student { string name; float gpa; };</pre>



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2.3. Object: an instantiated class

- C++ objects can be stored on the stack:

```
class A{};
int main() {
    A a, b;
};
```

- Or on the heap:

```
int main() {
    A *a = new A;
    A *b = new B;
};
```

- Compiler does stack; programmer does heap!



3. Constructors & Destructors

- No name and cannot be called directly
- Init data through initialization lists
- Constructor types are distinguished by their parameters.
- The four types of constructors are:
 1. Default
 2. Conversion
 3. Copy
 4. Move (which we describe in later slides)

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Constructor examples:

```
class Student {
public:
    Student();                // default: no params
    Student(char * n);       // convert
    Student(const Student&); // copy: param is Student
    Student(Student&&);      // move
    ~Student();              // destructor (no params)
private:
    char* name;
};
```

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3.1. Default Constructor

```
1 class string {
2 public:
3     string() : buf(new char[1]) { buf[0] = '\0'; }
4 private:
5     char* buf;
6 };
```

- No parameters to default constructor
- Uses an initialization list to create a “buffer” of length 1 characters: `buf(new char[1])`
- Places the null termination character into the newly created buffer.
- `cppreference`: Constructs an empty string, with a length of zero characters.



3.2. Prefer **initialization** to assignment

- Initialization is more efficient for data members that are objects (demo later)
- Only way to pass parameters to base class:

```
class Person {
public:
    Person(int a) : age(a) {}
private:
    int age;
};
class Student : public Person {
public:
    Student(int age, float g) : Person(age), gpa(g) {}
private:
    float gpa;
};
```

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3.3. Init performed in order of declare

- In `Student`, the constructor will initialize `iq` first, then `age`, because `iq` appears first in declaration (line 5).
- Initialization list not needed for built-in types.

```
1 class Student {
2 public:
3     Student(int a) : age(a), iq(age+100) {}
4 private:
5     int iq;
6     int age;
7 };
```



3.4. Conversion Constructor

```
1 class string {
2 public:
3     string(const char* b) :
4         buf(new char[strlen(b)+1]) {
5         strcpy(buf, b);
6     }
7 private:
8     char* buf;
9 };
```

- Converts **b**, on line 3, into a **string**
- **strlen** returns the size of the c-string, not including the null termination
- On line 4 we allocate **strlen(b)+1** bytes, where **+1** allows for the null termination

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3.5. Copy Constructor

```
1 class string {
2 public:
3     string(const string& s) :
4         buf(new char[strlen(s.buf)+1]) {
5         strcpy(buf, s.buf);
6     }
7 private:
8     char* buf;
9 };
```

- Copy constructor uses the parameter `s`, line 3, to make a **deep** copy.
- Notice the parameter transmission mode: `const&`

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3.6. Destructor

```
1 class string {
2 public:
3     ~string() { delete [] buf; }
4 private:
5     char* buf;
6 };
```

- We used `new char[]` in the constructors to allocate an array
- We use `delete []` on line 3 to indicate that we are deallocating an array.

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4. What if I don't write one

I write this:

```
class Empty{};
```

Compiler writes this:

```
class Empty {  
public:  
    Empty();  
    Empty(const Empty &);  
    ~Empty();  
    Empty& operator=(const Empty &);  
};
```

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4.1. Here's what they look like:

```
inline Empty::Empty() {}
inline Empty::~Empty() {}

inline Empty * Empty::operator&() {return this;}

inline const Empty * Empty::operator&() const {
    return this;
}
```

The copy constructor & assignment operator simply do a member wise copy, i.e., shallow. Note that the default copy/assign may induce leak/dbl free

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4.2. What can go wrong? Consider:

```
1 #include <iostream>
2 #include <cstring>
3 class string {
4 public:
5     string() : buf(new char[1]) { buf[0] = '\0'; }
6     string(const char * s) :
7         buf(new char[strlen(s)+1]) {
8         strcpy(buf, s);
9     }
10    ~string() { delete [] buf; }
11 private:
12     char * buf;
13 };
14 int main() {
15     string a, b(a);
16 }
```

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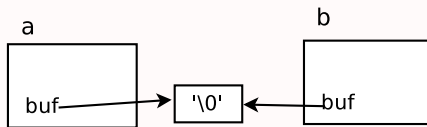
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4.3. Shallow Copy

- The previous example gives undefined behavior, usually **double free**.
- Default constructor creates **string a**, line 15
- However, the compiler generated copy constructor simply copies the address in **a.buf** into **b.buf**, which makes a shallow copy
- In memory it looks like:



Deletion of **a** is okay; deletion of **b** is a problem!

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4.4. Prevent Compiler Generated Ctors

- To address the problem of shallow copies, C++98 developers suggested placing signatures in private (line 10).
- Use of copy constructor won't compile
- This is Item #6 in Meyers Effective C++.

```
1 #include <iostream>
2 #include <cstring>
3 class string {
4 public:
5     string();
6     string(const char * s);
7     ~string() { delete [] buf; }
8 private:
9     char * buf;
10    string(const string&);
11 };
```

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4.5. C++11 Solution

- If the special syntax `= delete` is used, the function is defined as deleted (line 8)
- Any use of a deleted function is ill-formed and the program will not compile.

```
1 #include <iostream>
2 #include <cstring>
3 class string {
4 public:
5     string();
6     string(const char * s);
7     ~string() { delete [] buf; }
8     string(const string&) = delete;
9 private:
10    char * buf;
11 };
```

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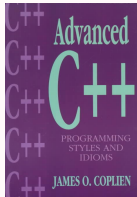
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4.6. Canonical Form

- James Coplien: a class with pointer data should be in *Canonical Form*, aka The Rule of Three, which means programmer writes:
 1. Copy constructor
 2. Copy assignment
 3. Destructor
- Canonical form prevents shallow copy



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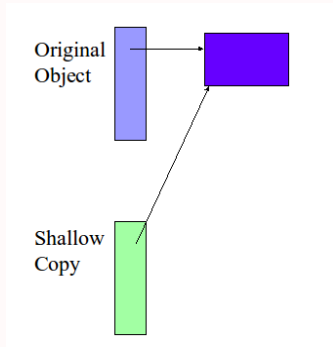
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4.7. Compiler generated \Rightarrow Shallow Copy



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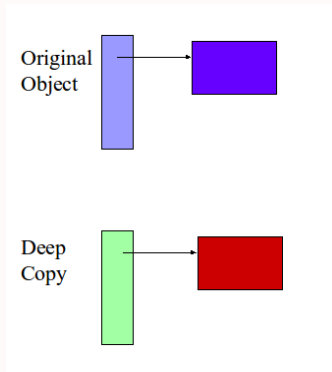
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4.8. Canonical Form \Rightarrow Deep Copy



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5. Why Prefer Init?

- Meyers, in Item #4 of Effective C++, says “prefer initialization to assignment” in ctors.
- The two examples in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate a considerable efficiency boost when using initialization rather than assignment.
- The two examples are exactly the same except for line 18:
 - Section 5.1, line 18, assignment::
`TestAssign(char* n) { name = n; }`
 - Section 5.2, line 18, initialization list:
`TestAssign(char* n) : name(n) { }`

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5.1. assign Example

```
1 #include <iostream>
2 #include <cstring>
3 class string {
4 public:
5     string() { std::cout << "default" << std::endl; }
6     string(const char* b) { std::cout << "convert" << std::endl; }
7     string(const string& s) { std::cout << "copy" << std::endl; }
8     ~string() { std::cout << "destructor" << std::endl; }
9     string& operator=(const string&) {
10         std::cout << "assign" << std::endl;
11         return *this;
12     }
13 private:
14     char* buf;
15 };
16 class TestAssign {
17 public:
18     TestAssign(char* n) { name = n; }
19 private:
20     string name;
21 };
22 int main() { TestAssign test("dog"); }
```

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- The output for the previous program in Section 5.1 is:

```
default
convert
assign
destructor
destructor
```

- The first line of output, `default`, results when the compiler tries to initialize `name` in an initialization list. Since there isn't one, it uses the default constructor.

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- The next two lines of output, **convert** and **assign** result from `name = n`, which doesn't match any function call as written. However, if `n` is **converted** to a string then it will match: `string.operator=(string)`.
- The first destructor call results when the compiler reallocates the temporary string that was created with the `convert`.
- The final destructor call results when the compiler deallocates `name` in `Student`.

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5.2. Init Example

```
1 #include <iostream>
2 #include <cstring>
3 class string {
4 public:
5     string() { std::cout << "default" << std::endl; }
6     string(const char* b) { std::cout << "convert" << std::endl; }
7     string(const string& s) { std::cout << "copy" << std::endl; }
8     ~string() { std::cout << "destructor" << std::endl; }
9     string& operator=(const string&) {
10         std::cout << "assign" << std::endl;
11         return *this;
12     }
13 private:
14     char* buf;
15 };
16 class TestInit {
17 public:
18     TestInit(char* n) : name(n) { }
19 private:
20     string name;
21 };
22 int main() { TestInit test("dog"); }
```

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- The output for the previous program in Section 5.2 is:

```
convert  
destructor
```

- Clearly, the initialization list, `name(n)`, is a use of the conversion constructor in `string` to convert `n` to a string.

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6. Static Class Variables

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7. Principle of Least Privilege

- A **const** class method cannot change any of the class data attributes.
- Use **const** as much as possible!
- Can reduce debugging
- Provides documentation
- Allow a function enough data access to accomplish its task and no more!
- Most beginners take them all out . . . probably need more!

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7.1. Example of Least Privilege

```
class string {
public:
    string(const char* n) : buf(new char[strlen(n)+1]) {
        strcpy(buf, n);
    }
    const char* get() const { return buf; }
private:
    char *buf;
};
std::ostream&
operator<<(std::ostream& out, const string& s) {
    return out << s.get();
}
int main() {
    string x("Hello");
    std::cout << x.get() << std::endl;
}
```

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7.2. What's wrong with this class?

```
class Student {  
public:  
    Student(const char * n) : name(n) { }  
    const getName() const { return name; }  
    void setName(char *n) { name = n; }  
private:  
    char *name;  
};
```

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8. Interface vs Implementation

Interface goes in .h file:

```
class Student {
public:
    getName() const { return name; }
    getGpa() const { return gpa; }
private:
    char * name;
    float gpa;
};
ostream& operator <<(ostream &, const Student &);
```

Implementation goes in .cpp file:

```
ostream & operator<<(ostream& out, const Student& s) {
    out << s.getName() << s.getGpa();
    return out;
}
```

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9. Makefiles

- Useful as projects grow larger with multiple files.
- Consist of definitions,
- Followed by sequences of 2 line commands.
 - First line begins with `< id >:`, followed by dependencies of `< id >`.
 - Second line is the rule to make `< id >`; this line **MUST** be preceded by a tab
- To use the make file type: `make {< id >}`, or simply: **make**

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9.1. Simple makefile

```
CCC=g++
FLAGS=-Wall

main: main.o Binary.o
    $(CCC) $(FLAGS) -o main main.o Binary.o

main.o: main.cpp Binary.h
    $(CCC) $(FLAGS) -c main.cpp

Binary.o: Binary.cpp Binary.h
    $(CCC) $(FLAGS) -c Binary.cpp

clean:
    rm -f main *.o core
```

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9.2. Discussion of Makefile

- $\$(CCC)$ permits us to easily switch to another compiler; e.g. clang++
- *make clean* will clean the directory of large files
- -o option creates an executable
- -c option creates .o file

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10. Overload Operators

```
1  class string {
2  public:
3      string ();
4      string(const char*);
5      string(const string&);
6      ~string ();
7      string operator+(const string&);
8      string& operator=(const string&);
9      char& operator [] (int index);
10     const char& operator [] const (int index);
11 private:
12     char *buf;
13 };
14 ostream& operator<<(ostream&, const string&);
15 string operator+(const char*, const string&);
```

Overloaded operators will be described separately.

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