

## Re: Why multiplication not allowed?

**Source:** [http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/C\\_CPP/comp.lang.c/2004-01/0606.html](http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/C_CPP/comp.lang.c/2004-01/0606.html)

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**Date:** 01/07/04

Date: Wed, 07 Jan 2004 09:14:35 -0500

Sean Kenwick wrote:

[snip]

> *But I think the reason I didn't get the job was because one of the other*  
> *questions the interviewer asked me was to tell him what was wrong with the*  
> *following statement:*  
>  
> *i+=i;*  
>  
> *I said that there was nothing wrong with it, but the interviewer claimed*  
> *that it was an ambiguous statement because it could mean adding i to itself*  
> *or setting i to +i. I got into an argument with him saying that he must*  
> *be confused with i+=i; but he was adamant he was right and got annoyed that*  
> *I was disagreeing with him.*  
>  
> *Afterwards I wondered whether this might have been some kind of syntax left*  
> *over from a very early incarnation of C which was subsequently dropped.*  
> *Perhaps the members of this group could enlighten me about this since I*  
> *think that this guy was just a complete idiot.*

ISTR an article by one of the original C developers (Dennis Ritchie or perhaps PJ Plauger) commenting on the /very/ early syntax of C. Specifically, the article said that the syntax

```
i =+ j;
```

had been considered as a way to express

```
i = i + j;
```

but was ultimately rejected because it was ambiguous, and could be confused with

```
i = j;
```

If I read <http://cm.bell-labs.com/cm/cs/who/dmr/chist.html> correctly, it looks like this ambiguous syntax was adopted from B into the earliest of C compilers, but later dropped (in 1976) before the adoption of "K&R C".

[snip]

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comp.lang.c: Re: Why multiplication not allowed?

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(Opinions expressed here are my own, not my employer's)