

Re: How to name variables in a program?

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/General/comp.programming/2005-05/msg00807.html>

- *From:* spinoza1111@xxxxxxxxxx
 - *Date:* 30 May 2005 22:15:43 -0700
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Arthur J. O'Dwyer wrote:

> On Sun, 29 May 2005 spinoza1111@xxxxxxxxxx wrote:
> [...]
> > certain programming groups at IBM. Since Szymonyi worked in mainframe
>
> Although I bet Nilges won't listen, I feel obliged to point out that
> Charles Simonyi's last name is "Simonyi", not "Szymonyi". In fact, the
> solitary Google hit for "Charles Szymonyi" is one of Nilges' earlier
> posts!

I'm not listening, I'm reading a man who asked me to keep promises he could not concerning conduct in this ng. But thanks for the apparent correction.

It may be because I've seen other Hungarian names such as the violinist Josef Szigeti and for this reason, upon reading of Simonyi's contributions in *Programmers at Work* (Susan Lammers 1986: Microsoft Press) I mistakenly remembered his name. Or the name may have been spelled in my fashion in Lammers' book (I no longer have my copy). As usual, my mistake seems the unfortunate possession of a fragment of erudition in a world where erudition is being sold on a sort of slave block by slave owners' ignorant great-grandchildren.

it may also be that Simonyi simplified his name. He had escaped from Hungary and in my experience, many friends whose fathers escaped the Eastern zone changed their names or simplified the spelling for fear of intelligence operatives working in the USA.

But when in Rome, even if it is the Rome of Nero, Caligula and Tony Soprano, one does as the Romans do.

>
> [snip a bunch of nilgewater]

Real cute. You might consider that if you are going to form a name flame, you might want to flame only me and not Captain Edward J. Nilges, who died in the last months of WWII and who was insulted in the

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Cleveland Plain Dealer because, it seems, his death came at a time when America (being already taken over by the feelgood predecessors of George Bush including Prescott Bush) was cheering up...since it was clearly winning. The Plain Dealer described his death as in effect spoiling the party because WWII was the birth of brutal celebrity, and its antithesis the name flame.

People who share my surname deserve common decency from even the likes of you Mr. Arthur J. O'Dwyer. They've accomplished much in their chosen fields, and as such my father et al. deserve not having you spread your goddamn confusion.

Do I make myself clear?

>

>> If you don't use Hungarian, then you have to THINK, what did I call
>> that stinky variable? If you do use the notation of the Magyars, then
>> you can think faster: "oh, I need that integer, what was it, tippy
>> typee i-n-t, oh yeah, there it is".

>

> This is actually a decent argument for Hungarian notation, in a
> Microsoft Visual Studio context. It's new to me. I have noticed that
> Microsoft style seems to put a lot of emphasis on /producing/ software,
> rather than /reading/ software, so in that mindset it makes a lot of
> sense to sacrifice a bit of readability for the ability to index
> variables by type.
> Where I would prefer to take the extra five or ten minutes per program
> to write 'width' where I mean "width," so the reader isn't burdened with
> a bunch of arcane prefixes --- Nilges and other VS users might naturally
> prefer to save the five or ten minutes by adjusting their naming scheme.

This is a caricature. I have a high rate of software production. My <shamelessPlug>book</shamelessPlug> contains 26000 lines of code, far more than the usual computer book, and when a manager asked me to self-measure I found my rate to be thousands of debugged lines per month.

But I don't work at Microsoft and in fact would probably not succeed at my age in merely grinding out code.

My whole point seems to have passed you by. There is no rage to burden the user with arcana. Quite the reverse. Instead, the responsible user of HN does it for one reason alone, and that is clarity in the context of what Dijkstra described as a radical novelty: the cruel world of a new form of applied mathematics.

Many people appoint themselves authorities on programming style. Few have the insight that comes from true literacy since they come from aliteracy. The insight is that no programming style should be use if it doesn't please its author, who is after all by definition the first reader.

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You would do well to consider that in this world, drawing-room notions of what constitutes "clarity" such as the simple word "width" no longer apply.

Width could be an integer quantity and as such a measure of discrete units, such that each unit has dimension and the "width" is the unit count and not the sum of their dimensions. Or it might be the real value of their summed widths. As such `intWidth` versus `dblWidth` clarifies the width.

> The reader won't thank them for 'iWidth', but in their paradigm, the
> "comfort" of people reading their code is insignificant compared to the
> speed of development.

This is NONSENSE. Let's see, us evil Microsoft guys are TYPING LONG IDENTIFIERS to save time (hint: we can use intellisense to find variables without prefixes as well: hint hint: I have interviewed at Microsoft twice and neither time was an offer made: hint hint hint: at both interviews I was delighted to be able to talk with Microsoft technicians who get to meet with, and brain tease, and otherwise grill applicants: hint^4: I enjoyed the Residence Inn: hint^5: when I first interviewed I was already 37 and as such outside the Microsoft developer demographic).

>
> (Of course, if Visual Studio let you type 'int' and up popped a list of
> variables /of that type/, rather than /beginning with those letters/,
> the former Hungarian-notation users would have the best of both worlds! :)

Of course, this feature would have to be carefully designed to differentiate the variables that ARE int and those that have the prefix, and to highlight invalid uses of the prefix.

>
> signing off,
> -Arthur

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• References:

- ◆ **How to name variables in a program?**
◇ From: SerGioGio
- ◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**
◇ From: Martijn
- ◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**
◇ From: Phlip
- ◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**
◇ From: spinoza1111
- ◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**
◇ From: Arafangion

Re: How to name variables in a program?

◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**

◇ From: websnarf

◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**

◇ From: spinoza1111

◆ **Re: How to name variables in a program?**

◇ From: Arthur J. O'Dwyer

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