

Class 25: Documenting Programs and Procedures

Held: Thursday, 11 October 2007

Summary: We consider documentation for your program - Why to write it, when to write it, how to write it.

Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: Documenting Your Procedures.

Notes:

- EC: Talk on the Gimp by your beloved TA, 4:15, 3821.
- Reading for tomorrow: Verifying Preconditions.
- Assignment 11 remains due at 4 p.m. tomorrow.

Overview:

- The need for documentation.
- The Six P's - a strategy for documenting procedures.
- Practice.

Documentation

- Why document? Text is often easier to read than code.
- Who is your audience? You have many.
 - People who must maintain and update your code.
 - People who must use your code.
 - People who incorporate your code into a bigger package.
- You write comments *within* code for those who must maintain and update your code. You often also write a *big picture* statement for such folks.
- Most of the comments you write in this class will be for people who are likely to use your code. We call these your *client programmers*.
- For such folks, we focus on *what* your procedures do.

The Six P's

- I prefer to document procedures for client programmers using a careful system, in which we always describe six aspects of the procedure: The name, the parameters, the purpose, the value the procedure produces, the preconditions, and the postconditions.
- The *Purpose* is intended to give a short, informal, summary of what the procedure does.

- The other three of the first four parameters are used to name things, so that we can refer to them elsewhere.
- The *Preconditions* formalize requirements that must be met in order for the procedure to function correctly.
- The *Postconditions* formalize the results of the procedure. They are often expressed in a combination of mathematics, Scheme, and English.

Practice

- We'll try writing documentation collaboratively for a variety of procedures.
 - `rgb-list.brightest`
 - `rgb.brighter`
 - ...
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