

Preconditions and Postconditions

Summary: In the laboratory, you will consider mechanisms for verifying the preconditions of procedures. You will also consider some issues in the documentation of such procedures.

Contents:

- Exercises
 - Exercise 1: Are they all real?
 - Exercise 2: Differentiating Between Errors
 - Exercise 3: When Can You Count Between?
 - Exercise 4: An Odd Factorial
 - Exercise 5: Finding Values
- For Those With Extra Time
 - Extra 1: Substitution

Exercises

Exercise 1: Are they all real?

- a. Document and write the `all-real?` procedure described in the accompanying reading.
- b. What preconditions should `all-real?` have?
- c. Is it necessary to test those preconditions? Why or why not?

When you're done, add `all-real?` to your library.

Exercise 2: Differentiating Between Errors

Revise the definition of `greatest-of-list` given in the corresponding reading so that it prints a different (and appropriate) error message for each error condition.

I'd recommend that you use `cond` rather than `if` in writing this revised version.

Exercise 3: When Can You Count Between?

Revise the definition of the `count-from` procedure presented in the reading on recursion with natural numbers so that it enforces the precondition that its first argument be less than or equal to its second argument.

Exercise 4: An Odd Factorial

Here is a procedure that computes the product of all of the odd natural numbers up to and including number:

```
(define odd-factorial
  (lambda (number)
    (if (= number 1)
        1
        (* number (odd-factorial (- number 2))))))
```

- What precondition or preconditions does `odd-factorial` impose on its argument?
- What will happen if these preconditions are not met?
- Revise the definition of `odd-factorial` as a husk-and-kernel program in which the husk enforces the precondition.
- How can we be certain, in this case, that none of the recursive calls we make to the kernel procedure violates the precondition?

Exercise 5: Finding Values

a. Document (using the six-P style), define, and test a procedure named `index-of` that takes a symbol `sym` and a list `ls` of symbols as its arguments and returns the index of `sym` in `ls`. You should use 0-based indices, so that the initial value in a list is at index 0. (Note that we defined a similar procedure in a recent homework assignment. I would prefer that you not refer to the answer key in your work here.)

```
> (index-of 'gamma (list 'alpha 'beta 'gamma 'delta))
2
> (index-of 'easy (list 'easy 'medium 'difficult 'impossible))
0
> (index-of 'the (list 'and 'the 'cat 'sat 'on 'the 'mat))
1
```

- Arrange for `index-of` to signal an error (by invoking the `error` procedure) if `sym` does not occur at all as an element of `ls`.
- If `sym` does not occur as an element of `ls`, is it better to have for `index-of` to invoke `error` or return a special value (such as `-1` or `#f`)? Explain your answer.

When you're done, add `index-of` to your library.

For Those With Extra Time

Extra 1: Substitution

Document (using the six P style), define, and test a procedure named `substitute` that takes three arguments -- a symbol `new`, another symbol `old`, and a list `ls` of symbols -- and returns a list just like `ls` except that every occurrence of `old` has been replaced with an occurrence of `new`. Use the husk-and-kernel structure to make sure that `new` and `old` are symbols and that `ls` is a list of symbols before starting into the recursion.

```
> (substitute 'alpha 'omega (list 'phi 'chi 'psi 'omega 'omega))
(phi chi psi alpha alpha)
> (substitute 'starboard 'port (list 'port 'starboard 'port 'port))
(starboard starboard starboard starboard)
> (substitute 'in 'out null)
()
> (substitute "in" 'out null)
substitute: expected a symbol as first parameter
> (substitute 'in 'out (list 'alpha "beta" 23))
substitute: expected a list of symbols as third parameter
```

Copyright © 2007 Samuel A. Rebelsky. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.5 License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.5/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 543 Howard Street, 5th Floor, San Francisco, California, 94105, USA.