

The Programmer's Quick Guide to Languages

The proliferation of programming languages (all of which seem to have stolen countless features from one another) sometimes makes it difficult to remember what language you're currently using. This handy reference is offered as a public service to help programmers who find themselves in such a dilemma.

TASK: Shoot yourself in the foot.

- C: You shoot yourself in the foot.
- C++: You accidentally create a dozen instances of yourself and shoot them all in the foot. Providing emergency medical assistance is impossible since you can't tell which are bitwise copies and which are just pointing at others and saying, "That's me, over there."
- FORTRAN: You shoot yourself in each toe, iteratively, until you run out of toes, then you read in the next foot and repeat. If you run out of bullets, you continue with the attempts to shoot yourself anyway because you have no exception-handling capability.
- Pascal: The compiler won't let you shoot yourself in the foot.
- Ada: After correctly packing your foot, you attempt to concurrently load the gun, pull the trigger, scream, and shoot yourself in the foot. When you try, however, you discover you can't because your foot is of the wrong type.
- COBOL: Using a COLT 45 HANDGUN, AIM gun at LEG.FOOT, THEN place ARM.HAND.FINGER on HANDGUN.TRIGGER and SQUEEZE. THEN return HANDGUN to HOLSTER. CHECK whether shoelace needs to be re-tied.
- Haskell/scheme/LISP: You shoot yourself in the appendage which holds the gun with which you shoot yourself in the appendage which holds the gun with which you shoot yourself in the appendage which holds the gun with which you shoot yourself in the appendage which holds the gun with which you shoot yourself in the appendage which holds...
- FORTH: Foot in yourself shoot.
- Prolog: You tell your program that you want to be shot in the foot. The program figures out how to do it, but the syntax doesn't permit it to explain it to you.
- BASIC: Shoot yourself in the foot with a water pistol. On large systems, continue until entire lower body is waterlogged.
- Visual Basic: You'll really only appear to have shot yourself in the foot, but you'll have had so much fun doing it that you won't care.
- HyperTalk: Put the first bullet of gun into foot left of leg of you. Answer the result.
- Motif: You spend days writing a UIL description of your foot, the bullet, its trajectory, and the intricate scroll work on the ivory handles of the gun. When you finally get around to pulling the trigger, the gun jams.
- APL: You shoot yourself in the foot, then spend all day figuring out how to do it in fewer characters.

- SNOBOL: If you succeed, shoot yourself in the left foot. If you fail, shoot yourself in the right foot.

- Unix/Linux:

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% ls
foot.c foot.h foot.o toe.c toe.o
% rm * .o
rm: .o no such file or directory
% ls
%
```

- 370 JCL: You send your foot down to MIS and include a 400-page document explaining exactly how you want it to be shot. Three years later, your foot comes back deep-fried.
- INFORMIX: The first gun doesn't work. Three months later INFORMIX's support desk sends another gun which doesn't match the version number of the bullets. INFORMIX suggests you upgrade to INFORMIX-ONLINE. You pull the trigger and your shoe gets wet.
- Access: You try to point the gun at your foot, but it shoots holes in all your Borland¹ distribution diskettes² instead.
- Assembler: You try to shoot yourself in the foot, only to discover you must first invent the gun, the bullet, the trigger, and your foot.
- Modula2: After realizing that you can't actually accomplish anything in this language, you shoot yourself in the head.
- sh, bash, csh, etc: You can't remember the syntax for anything, so you spend five hours reading man pages before giving up. You then shoot the computer and switch to C.
- dBASE IV version 1.0: You pull the trigger, but it turns out that the gun was a poorly-designed grenade and the whole building blows up.
- dBASE PLUS 10: You can't believe dBASE is still going after 30 years, see that it's **still** based on DOS, and you're so flumoxed that you forgot what you were supposed to shoot.
- Perl: You grep through a list of your body parts, shooting the bits that look like feet. On the first try, you don't shoot anything, and realize that you're matching hashrefs instead of scalars. On the second try, you shoot off your big toe instead of the whole foot (shouldn't have used greedy matching in the regex). Finally, you shoot yourself in the foot, generalize your code to allow it to shoot anyone anywhere, and post it on CPAN as SUICIDE::LITE.
- Python: You insert the bullet into the gun but because there were actually TAB characters in the barrel instead of spaces, the gun jams with an IndentError. You fix the error and fire the gun, but the bullet travels so slowly towards your foot that you get tired and leave.
- Java: You find that Microsoft and Oracle have released incompatible class libraries both implementing Gun objects. You then find that although there are plenty of feet objects implemented in the past in many other languages, you cannot get access to one. But seeing as Java is so cool, you don't care and go around shooting anything else you can find.

¹Who or what is Borland?

²And what the heck is a "diskette?"