

C++ Constructor Insanity

CSE 333 Winter 2024

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Administrivia

- ❖ Next exercise released today, due Monday morning
 - Write a substantive class in C++ (but no dynamic allocation – yet)
 - Look at `Complex.h/Complex.cc` (this lecture) for ideas
- ❖ Homework 2 due next Thursday (2/1)
 - How's it going? Any surprises, questions, problems?
- ❖ Please submit regrade requests for assignments promptly
 - Will be shutting down regrades about a week after feedback returned so we can copy grades to final canvas gradebook

Lecture Outline

- ❖ **Constructors**
- ❖ Copy Constructors
- ❖ Assignment
- ❖ Destructors
- ❖ An extended example

Constructors

- ❖ A **constructor (ctor)** initializes a newly-instantiated object
 - A class can have multiple constructors that differ in parameters
 - Which one is invoked depends on *how* the object is instantiated

- ❖ Written with the class name as the method name:

```
Point(const int x, const int y);
```

- C++ will automatically create a **synthesized default constructor** if you have **no** user-defined constructors
 - Takes no arguments and calls the default ctors on all non-“plain old data” (non-POD) member variables
 - Synthesized default ctor will fail if you have non-initialized const or reference data members

Synthesized Default Constructor

```
class SimplePoint {
public:
    // no constructors declared!
    int get_x() const { return x_; } // inline member function
    int get_y() const { return y_; } // inline member function
    double Distance(const SimplePoint& p) const;
    void SetLocation(const int x, const int y);

private:
    int x_; // data member
    int y_; // data member
}; // class SimplePoint
```

SimplePoint.h

```
#include "SimplePoint.h"

... // definitions for Distance() and SetLocation()

int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    SimplePoint x; // invokes synthesized default constructor
    return 0;
}
```

SimplePoint.cc

Synthesized Default Constructor

- ❖ If you define any constructors, C++ assumes you have defined all the ones you intend to be available and will not add any others

```
#include "SimplePoint.h"

// defining a constructor with two arguments
SimplePoint::SimplePoint(const int x, const int y) {
    x_ = x;
    y_ = y;
}

void foo() {
    SimplePoint x;           // compiler error: if you define any
                           // ctors, C++ will NOT synthesize a
                           // default constructor for you.

    SimplePoint y(1, 2);    // works: invokes the 2-int-arguments
                           // constructor
}
```

Multiple Constructors (overloading)

```
#include "SimplePoint.h"

// default constructor
SimplePoint::SimplePoint() {
    x_ = 0;
    y_ = 0;
}

// constructor with two arguments
SimplePoint::SimplePoint(const int x, const int y) {
    x_ = x;
    y_ = y;
}

void foo() {
    SimplePoint x;           // invokes the default constructor
    SimplePoint a[3];       // invokes the default ctor 3 times
                           // (fails if no default ctor)
    SimplePoint y(1, 2);    // invokes the 2-int-arguments ctor
}
```

Initialization Lists

- ❖ C++ lets you *optionally* declare an **initialization list** as part of a constructor definition
 - Initializes fields according to parameters in the list
 - The following two are (nearly) identical:

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) {  
    x_ = x;  
    y_ = y;  
    std::cout << "Point constructed: (" << x_ << ", ";  
    std::cout << y_ << ")" << std::endl;  
}
```

```
// constructor with an initialization list  
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) : x_(x), y_(y) {  
    std::cout << "Point constructed: (" << x_ << ", ";  
    std::cout << y_ << ")" << std::endl;  
}
```


Initialization vs. Construction

```
class Point3D {
public:
    // constructor with 3 int arguments
    Point3D(const int x, const int y, const int z) : y_(y), x_(x) {
        z_ = z;
    }

private:
    int x_, y_, z_; // data members
}; // class Point3D
```

First, initialization list is applied.

Next, constructor body is executed.

- Data members in initializer list are initialized in the order they are defined in the class, not by the initialization list ordering (!)
 - Data members that don't appear in the initialization list are *default initialized/constructed* before body is executed
- Initialization preferred to assignment to avoid extra steps of default initialization (construction) followed by assignment
- (and no, real code should never mix the two styles this way 😊)

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Copy Constructors

- ❖ C++ has the notion of a **copy constructor (cctor)**
 - Used to create a new object as a copy of an existing object

```
Point::Point(const int x, const int y) : x_(x), y_(y) { }  
  
// copy constructor  
Point::Point(const Point& copyme) {  
    x_ = copyme.x_;  
    y_ = copyme.y_;  
}  
  
void foo() {  
    Point x(1, 2); // invokes the 2-int-arguments constructor  
  
    Point y(x);   // invokes the copy constructor  
                 // could also be written as "Point y = x;"  
}
```

- Initializer lists can also be used in copy constructors (preferred)

When Do Copies Happen?

❖ The copy constructor is invoked if:

- You *initialize* an object from another object of the same type:

```
Point x;           // default ctor  
Point y(x);       // copy ctor  
Point z = y;      // copy ctor
```

- You pass a non-reference object as a value parameter to a function:

```
void foo(Point x) { ... }  
  
Point y;           // default ctor  
foo(y);           // copy ctor
```

- You return a non-reference object value from a function:

```
Point foo() {  
    Point y;       // default ctor  
    return y;     // copy ctor  
}
```

Compiler Optimization

- ❖ The compiler sometimes uses a “return by value optimization” or “move semantics” to eliminate unnecessary copies
 - Sometimes you might not see a constructor get invoked when you might expect it

```
Point foo() {  
    Point y;           // default ctor  
    return y;         // copy ctor? optimized?  
}  
  
Point x(1, 2);        // two-ints-argument ctor  
Point y = x;          // copy ctor  
Point z = foo();     // copy ctor? optimized?
```

Synthesized Copy Constructor

- ❖ If you don't define your own copy constructor, C++ will synthesize one for you
 - It will do a *shallow* copy of all of the fields (*i.e.* member variables) of your class
 - Sometimes the right thing; sometimes the wrong thing

```
#include "SimplePoint.h"

... // definitions for Distance() and SetLocation()

int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    SimplePoint x;
    SimplePoint y(x); // invokes synthesized copy constructor
    ...
    return 0;
}
```

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Assignment != Construction

- ❖ “=” is the **assignment operator**
 - Assigns values to an *existing, already constructed* object

```
Point w;           // default ctor
Point x(1, 2);    // two-ints-argument ctor
Point y(x);       // copy ctor
Point z = w;      // copy ctor
y = x;            // assignment operator
```

- How can you tell the difference between assignment operator= and a copy constructor that uses =?
 - Answer: are you creating/initializing a new object? If so, it's a copy constructor; if you are just updating an existing object it's assignment

Overloading the “=” Operator

- ❖ You can choose to define the “=” operator
 - But there are some rules you should follow:

```
Point& Point::operator=(const Point& rhs) {  
    if (this != &rhs) { // (1) always check against this  
        x_ = rhs.x_;  
        y_ = rhs.y_;  
    }  
    return *this; // (2) always return *this from op=  
}  
  
Point c; // default constructor  
a = b = c; // works because = return *this  
a = (b = c); // equiv. to above (= is right-associative)  
(a = b) = c; // "works" because = returns a non-const
```

Synthesized Assignment Operator

- ❖ If you don't define the assignment operator, C++ will synthesize one for you
 - It will do a *shallow* copy of all of the fields (*i.e.* member variables) of your class
 - Sometimes the right thing; sometimes the wrong thing

```
#include "SimplePoint.h"

... // definitions for Distance() and SetLocation()

int main(int argc, char** argv) {
    SimplePoint x;
    SimplePoint y(x);
    y = x;           // invokes synthesized assignment operator
    return 0;
}
```

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Destructors

- ❖ C++ has the notion of a **destructor (dtor)**
 - Invoked automatically when a class instance is deleted, goes out of scope, etc. (even via exceptions or other causes!)
 - Place to put your cleanup code – free any dynamic storage or other resources owned by the object
 - Standard C++ idiom for managing dynamic resources
 - Slogan: “*Resource Acquisition Is Initialization*” (RAII)

```
Point::~~Point() { // destructor
    // do any cleanup needed when a Point object goes away
    // (nothing to do here since we have no dynamic resources)
}
```

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Complex Example Walkthrough

See:

`Complex.h`

`Complex.cc`

`testcomplex.cc`

- ❖ (Some details like friend functions and namespaces are explained in more detail next lecture, but ideas should make sense from looking at the code and explanations in *C++ Primer*.)

Extra Exercise #1

- ❖ Modify your Point3D class from Lec 10 Extra #1
 - Disable the copy constructor and assignment operator
 - Attempt to use copy & assignment in code and see what error the compiler generates
 - Write a `CopyFrom()` member function and try using it instead
 - (See details about `CopyFrom()` in next lecture)

Extra Exercise #2

- ❖ Write a C++ class that:
 - Is given the name of a file as a constructor argument
 - Has a `GetNextWord()` method that returns the next whitespace- or newline-separated word from the file as a copy of a `string` object, or an empty string once you hit EOF
 - Has a destructor that cleans up anything that needs cleaning up