

# Computer Programming

## File I/O

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# Files and streams

A *file* is a data resource on persistent storage (e.g. disk).  
File contents are typically sequences of bytes.

A *stream* is a program's view (logical view) of a file, also as sequence of characters (bytes).

To work with files, a program must

1. associate a stream with a file, by *opening* the file.  
A stream is associated with the C datatype `FILE *`
2. work with the stream, just like with `stdin` and `stdout` (two standard streams), with the *same or similar functions*
3. finish by *closing* the file

All functions discussed are in `stdio.h` unless noted

That's it!

## Text and binary streams

*Text files* are files with human-readable content:

.txt files, programs .c, .c++, web pages .html, .xml files, etc.

*Text streams* contain *characters* grouped in *lines* terminated by `\n`

Conversions may occur in reading/writing text streams.

e.g. end of line is `\r\n` in Windows vs. `\n` in Unix

Standard guarantees one-to-one correspondence if:

text contains only printable chars, tab and newline

no newline is immediately preceded by spaces

last character is a newline

*Binary files* are not human-readable as character sequences:

.exe, .mp3, though they may contain text: .doc, .pdf

*Binary streams* record internal data as-is .

The sequence of characters read is *exactly the same* as was written

⇒ Any (text) file may also be opened as binary stream

## File opening modes

**r**: open for reading (file must exist)

**w**: open for writing (truncated to length 0 if existing, else created)

**a**: open for appending (writing at end of file; created if inexistent)

*any* writes go to *current* end-of-file,  
regardless of prior positioning with `fseek`

First character (**r**, **w**, **a**) of opening mode may be followed by:

**+** (**r+**, **w+**, **a+**): open as stated, but can use for input *and* output

*must* position (`fseek`) for write after read, unless EOF

*must* position or `fflush` for read after write

**b**: opens binary file (otherwise: text; no explicit text mode)

**x**: (eXclusive) may be last char *only* in **w** mode

file must not exist; no shared access allowed (if system support)

Examples: `rb+` (read/write, binary), `wx`, `wb+x`, `a+x`, etc.

## Opening and closing files

`FILE *fopen (const char *pathname, const char *mode)`

arg. 1: *file name* (absolute or relative to current directory)

arg. 2: *string* with *open mode*: r, w, or a; optionally +, b, x

```
FILE *f1 = fopen("/home/u/t.txt", "r"); // fixed name, avoid
```

```
FILE *f2 = fopen(argv[2], "w"); // second arg in command line
```

```
char name[128]; // example with user-given name
```

```
if (scanf("%127s", name) == 1) {
```

```
    FILE *f = fopen(name, "ab+"); // open binary, append+read
```

```
    if (!f) { /* not opened, handle error */ }
```

```
}
```

fopen returns NULL on error (*MUST test!*)

Otherwise, returned value (a FILE \*) *used for all other functions*  
work with *stream* (logical), not with name (physical)

```
int fclose(FILE *stream)
```

Writes any buffered data to disk, closes file

Returns 0 on success, EOF on error. *SHOULD also test!*

(tell user if save of precious data failed!)

## Standard streams. Redirection

**stdin**: standard input stream (default: from keyboard)

getchar, scanf, etc. read from here

**stdout**: standard output stream (default: to screen)

putchar, printf, puts write here

**stderr**: standard error stream (default: to screen)

These streams are automatically open when program runs

Write error messages to stderr, separate from output (results)!

From command line: can *redirect* standard streams to files,

input: program < in.txt (will read from in.txt)

output: program > out.txt (will write to out.txt)

both: program < in.txt > out.txt

Can also redirect from within program (with **freopen**)

Remember: can run command from C with **system** (in `stdlib.h`)

# File input/output

*character*-based

```
int fputc(int c, FILE *stream) // write char to file; also putc
int fgetc(FILE *stream) // read char from file; also getc
int ungetc(int c, FILE *stream) // puts ONE char back in stream
```

*line*-based (one text line)

```
int fputs(const char *s, FILE *stream) // writes string as is
int puts(const char *s) // writes string + \n to stdout
char *fgets(char *s, int size, FILE *stream)
// reads line into s, max. size-1 chars incl. \n, adds \0
```

*formatted* I/O (same as printf/scanf, from file in first arg)

```
int fscanf (FILE *stream, const char *format, ...)
int fprintf(FILE *stream, const char *format, ...)
```

## Working with files

Typical sequence for working with files (name on command line)

```
#include <errno.h>
#include <stdio.h>
int main(int argc, char *argv[])
{
    if (argc != 2) {
        fprintf(stderr, "correct usage: program filename\n");
        return 1; // or some other error code
    }
    FILE *fp = fopen(argv[1], "r");
    if (!fp) { perror("error on open"); return errno; }

    // use file: getc, fscanf, fgets, fprintf, etc.

    if (fclose(fp)) { perror("error on close"); return errno; }
    return 0;
}
```



## Error functions

`int feof(FILE *stream)` nonzero if at EOF

`int ferror(FILE *stream)` nonzero if file had errors

Do *NOT* loop while `!feof(f)` :

EOF is *NOT detected* when *at* end, only when trying to read *past* it

⇒ loop *while read OK*; if not, check `feof(f)` or `ferror(f)`

### *Error codes*

global variable `int errno` declared in `errno.h`

contains code of last error in a library function

(illegal operation, file not found, not enough memory, etc.)

Function `void perror(const char *s)` from `stdio.h`

prints user message `s`, a colon `:` and then the error description

(same as given by `char *strerror(int errnum)` from `string.h`)

## Direct I/O (binary format)

Read/write bytes as-is, without conversion, from/to binary streams

```
size_t fread(void *ptr, size_t size, size_t nmemb, FILE *strm)
```

```
size_t fwrite(void *ptr, size_t size, size_t nmemb, FILE *strm)
```

read/write nmemb objects of size bytes each

Return value: *number* of *complete* objects read/written

If smaller than requested, find reason from feof and ferror

Use to read/write numbers *in binary format* (like in memory)

**CAUTION:** must know how numbers are stored in file and memory  
(little endian or big endian): could be different!

## Chars, ints and EOF revisited

Files (and standard input) contain *bytes (chars)*

*EOF* is *NOT* a *char* (the *point* is to distinguish it from any char!)

chars read by `getchar` or `getc` are *unsigned*, EOF is -1

variable read with `getchar/getc` must be `int` so it can fit either

`scanf`, `fgets`, `fread` read arrays of *bytes (chars)*

need no `int`, since they report end-of-file differently

EOF can never be in an array read (since it's *NOT* a *char*)

*Don't mix signed and unsigned!*

`char` *may* be signed

If reading `char` as `int`, compare to `int`: `0xFF`, `0xDA`, etc.

or if declaring `unsigned char buf[]`

If declared as `char`, compare with `char`: `'\xff'`, `'\xda'`, etc.

## File positioning

Reading and writing use the same *file position indicator*

`long ftell(FILE *stream)` returns position from start of file

`int fseek(FILE *stream, long offset, int whence)`

Sets file position indicator to offset; 3rd arg is reference point:  
start (SEEK\_SET), current point (SEEK\_CUR), end(SEEK\_END)

`void rewind(FILE *stream)` sets file position indicator to start  
same as `fseek(stream, 0L, SEEK_SET); clearerr(stream);`

Use (re)positioning to skip parts of the file on reading,  
or to write a selected part

MUST use `fseek/fflush` when switching between read and write!

Positioning may not be possible in any file (e.g. `stdin/stdout`)

`int fflush(FILE *stream)`

writes unwritten data buffers for the given file