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Subject: Re: keyword question

Posted by [John-David T. Smith](#) on Wed, 23 May 2001 16:35:44 GMT

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David Fanning wrote:

```
>
> Randall Skelton (rhskelto@atm.ox.ac.uk) writes:
>
>> I am trying to have an array *optionally* returned using a keyword
>> and I don't know the dimension of the array prior to the call. Why is
>> it that the passed keyword needs to be defined in IDL prior to being used
>> as a keyword?
>>
>> What am I doing wrong here?
>
> You are using the wrong function to check the keyword.
> KEYWORD_SET should *only* be used to test keywords that
> have a binary function. That is, they are either on or off,
> true or false, 0 or 1, etc.
>
> What you want to know is if you keyword is *defined* or
> not. You use N_ELEMENTS to tell you this:
>
> IF N_Elements(b) EQ 0 THEN b = FltArr(10)
```

Actually, since he's trying to return something, he should use `arg_present()` (which really should be called `by_reference()` or something). This doesn't check if the keyword is defined or not (presumably you don't care), but just whether its value at the main level can be altered:

```
if arg_present(b) then b = fltarr(10)
```

`Arg_present()` was added some time ago to solve just this type of problem (which RSI did internally with IDL functions quite a bit).

JD

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