

---

Subject: Re: [Offtopic] Re: Strange problem  
Posted by [Jeff Hester](#) on Fri, 07 Dec 2001 16:29:03 GMT  
[View Forum Message](#) <> [Reply to Message](#)

---

Bhautik,

I will respond in kind. I agree that IDL is a very useful and accessible tool. I grew up thinking that "Image processing system" meant a PDP 11/55 running Unix V6, a Genisco 512 X 512 x 8-bit image display that could be programmed across a DEUNA parallel interface, and a C compiler. I cannot begin to tell you the level of appreciation that I have for what IDL offers.

I have also worked with quite a few students over the years, and know two things:

1. There is a certain base of knowledge that is necessary as a starting point for any really interesting or useful discussion; and
2. When it comes to the basics of numerical computing, there are far more efficient ways to obtain that knowledge than by trial and error.

If the fact that  $0.1+0.1+0.1+0.1+0.1+0.1+0.1+0.1$  does not equal 0.8 seems subtle or comes as a surprise, then there are many things that you do not know but that you NEED to know that are much more fundamental than how to use IDL. And as you try to learn IDL, you will find yourself tripping over your lack of that basic knowledge again and again and again.

I do not know your position, the kind of work that you do, or anything else about you. But I do know this. Your time would be very well spent if you went off and either took a one semester computing course at a local college, or at least picked up a text for such a course and worked through it yourself. You would be very well served by the insight that you gain into what the computer is doing when you add floating point numbers, for example. You also would discover a whole suite of issues that will end up biting you in the ass if you do not know they are coming. You might even gain some sensitivity to issues of structured programming that will make your life far easier in the long run.

An IDL newsgroup is a reasonable place to begin to stumble through this particular language. It is arguably a less reasonable place to learn to count.

Best wishes,  
Jeff Hester

Bhautik Jitendra Joshi wrote:

>> Sorry, but I've really needed a good laugh for a while, and this thread has

>> provided it. It has even made for some amusing lunch-time conversation.  
>> But all good things must come to an end. Besides, pulling the wings off  
>> flies is not sporting. I should be ashamed.

>

> fly: 0o0 (fly is extremely happy)

>

> fly w/o wings: 0 'o' 0 (the little ' stand for little fly tears.

> the little fly is depressed because he

> (or she, lets not discriminate) has no

> more wings, and feels that they no

> longer serve any meaningful purpose)

>

> Mr. Hester - in all seriousness (really, I've got my serious face on now,

> look, I'm not even smirking), IDL is a useful, and more importantly,

> accessible tool that enables people from all walks of life, even those

> without a computer science background, to use computers for scientific

> data analysis.

>

> However, there are many users that still need to learn many things about

> scientific computing and am I not wrong in thinking that this is the

> perfect place to do it? This newsgroup is about (as far as I can tell)

> learning how to use IDL and perform scientific computing, and not to

> villify those who do not know it.

>

>

> / \_\_\_\_\_ \  
> |bjoshi@geocities.com | phone: 0404032617 |  
> |ICQ #: 2464537 | http://i.am/captinnod |  
> \~~~~~(\_\_\_\_)~~~~~/  
> (\_\_\_\_) |..|--\  
> /--|^^| moo | |--|  
> |--| | \OO/||^  
> ^||\oo/ moo

--

Jeff Hester

Professor

Dept. of Physics & Astronomy

Arizona State University

jhester@asu.edu