
Subject: Re: Optional parameters

Posted by [Pavel Romashkin](#) on Tue, 24 Feb 2004 17:59:29 GMT

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I agree. I never had a problem with this because I never put unneeded variables in a call to a procedure. I fail to see the logic in putting

```
myfunction, var1=uselessvar
```

as opposed to just

```
myfunction
```

and then worrying about uselessvar getting defined all of a sudden. The only time this might happen in real life I suppose is if you use copy-paste to insert function calls that address all of the provided keywords. Pavel

David Fanning wrote:

```
>
> David Fanning writes:
>
>> Here is the same program with an optional keyword parameter
>> named "junk":
>>
>>   PRO TEST, JUNK=junk
>>     On_Error, 1
>>     IF N_Elements(junk) EQ 0 THEN junk = 3
>>     Print, junk
>>   END
>
> An alert reader, who wishes to remain anonymous, but who
> is well-known in the IDL programming community, points out
> that there is one possible gotcha in this formulation.
> Namely, that an input variable that was previously undefined
> is now defined by my example. In other words:
>
> IDL> Help, junk
>   JUNK      UNDEFINED = <Undefined>
> IDL> Test, JUNK=junk
> IDL> Help, junk
>   JUNK      INT      =      3
>
> If the user were counting on the variable junk to remain
> undefined for some reason, there would be a nasty surprise
> in store here.
>
> This is, of course, a consequence of parameters being input
```

> or output (or both) according to usage. I guess strictly
> speaking, you would need two different variables to represent
> parameters that are strictly input variables. The reader suggests
> this:
>
> PRO TEST, JUNK=junk_local
> On_Error, 1
> junk = n_elements(junk_local) eq 0 ? 3 : junk_local
> Print, junk
> END
>
> While I absolutely agree with the logic, I find this to be a royal
> pain in the neck in practice. Do you read Whinnie the Pooh? I am
> one of those "bears of little brain" and having two names for the
> same variable sends me into fits of confusion every time. Lord knows
> I have enough problems just keeping up with defining the same keywords
> over and over again for INIT, SetProperty, and GetProperty methods.
> Double names sounds like double work to me. I guess I'd rather track
> down the very rare "defined when I didn't want it to be" error than
> be frustrated with all the damn typos! :-)
>
> Cheers,
>
> David
>
> P.S. Let's just say I admire the good folks at RSI who are going
> to all the trouble to make input keywords strictly input. :-)
>
> --
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