
Subject: Re: Optional parameters

Posted by [JD Smith](#) on Tue, 24 Feb 2004 16:10:19 GMT

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On Mon, 23 Feb 2004 18:05:20 -0700, David Fanning wrote:

> Michael Wallace writes:

>

>> The learning of IDL continues.... today's question is about optional
>> parameters. Specifically, how do you make a parameter optional? I can
>> find stuff in the IDL documentation regarding position parameters and
>> keywords, but I haven't found anything yet about optional parameters.
>> So, how do you create optional parameters and what are common gotchas
>> with using them?

>

> An optional parameter can be either a positional parameter or a keyword
> parameter, although the general rule of thumb is that positional
> parameters are always required and keyword parameters are always
> optional. The rule is broken frequently, especially with positional
> parameters and less so with keyword parameters (having to suffer
> the wrath of Coyote if you violate the "keyword is optional" dictum
> probably accounts for the decreased frequency of the latter).

>

I would have put it more simply: all parameters, keyword or positional, are optional in IDL. How you choose to treat missing parameters defines the behavior of a routine. See David's linked article for more. I think there are enough useful example (even among RSI's own offerings) which violate this general rule of thumb that it shouldn't be considered a rule.

JD
