
Subject: Undefined variables in structures

Posted by [Joost Aan de Brugh](#) on Wed, 10 Sep 2008 09:16:24 GMT

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Hello all,

What is the most plausible way to undefine variables in a structure.

Sometimes, you need undefined variables to put into optional arguments if the procedure checks with N_Elements(..) ne 0.

For example:

plot,...,color=fsc_color(colorname,filename=consts.COLOR_FILENAME),...

If I do not want to use an own color file, I need to undefine consts.COLOR_FILENAME. Note that "" as filename is an error.

Several attempts

1

```
if consts.COLOR_FILENAME eq "" then void =
Temporary(consts.COLOR_FILENAME)
; does not work in a struct. consts.COLOR_FILENAME remains ""
```

2

```
temp_color_filename = consts.COLOR_FILENAME
if consts.COLOR_FILENAME eq "" then void =
Temporary(temp_color_filename)
plot,...,color=fsc_color(color,filename=temp_color_filename) ,...
; Not the way to go. Makes the code messy, especially when more
variables have to be undefined this way
```

3

```
if consts.COLOR_FILENAME eq "" then
plot,...,color=fsc_color(color),... else
plot,...,color=fsc_color(color,filename=consts.COLOR_FILENAME)
; Not the way to go. Will create a huge if-then-else pyramid when
using several optional arguments.
```

4

```
plot,...,color=fsc_color(color,filename=consts.COLOR_FILENAME eq ""?
undefined:consts.COLOR_FILENAME),...
; No pyramid because of the ? : construction But this is very hacky,
because I am using a nonsense name (undefined).
```

5 ; The way I now just thought of.

Make it a pointer and during startup

```
if *const.COLOR_FILENAME eq "" then void =
Temporary(*consts.COLOR_FILENAME)
and then simply
plot,...,color=fsc_color(color,filename=*consts.COLOR_FILENAME)
```

; This does work. I can dereference the pointer, because it is a valid
pointer to an undefined heap variable. It is still a little bit
tricky, but the least evil of these possibilities (in my opinion).

Are there people with more experience with these kinds of
constructions and know a better way to do this.

(Actually, I was already formulation this question before I thought
about the pointer)
