
Subject: `_overloadMinus`: what to do with invalid input?
Posted by [Paul Van Delst\[1\]](#) on Mon, 29 Dec 2014 18:34:19 GMT
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Hello,

I am overloading the "-" operator for various objects and I have a philosophical question about what to do when the objects do not match.

For example, should one return a FALSE result if the objects are not the same, e.g.

```
FUNCTION Cloud::_overloadMinus, left, right
  IF ( (~ ISA(left,'Cloud')) || (~ ISA(right,'Cloud')) ) THEN $
    RETURN, FALSE
```

giving:

```
IDL> q = fd_cloud[0] - 1
IDL> help, q
Q          INT      =      0
```

...or should one throw an error and halt, e.g.

```
FUNCTION Cloud::_overloadMinus, left, right
  IF ( (~ ISA(left,'Cloud')) || (~ ISA(right,'Cloud')) ) THEN $
    MESSAGE, 'Must supply two Cloud objects for subtraction'
```

leading to:

```
IDL> q = fd_cloud[0] - 1
% CLOUD::_OVERLOADMINUS: Must supply two Cloud objects for subtraction
```

Which is the more idiomatic for IDL?

cheers,

paulv
