
Subject: Newbie Questions

Posted by [Geoff Herbyinchuk](#) on Tue, 15 May 2001 14:42:27 GMT

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Hi,

Was just wondering if IDL can have pointers to structures. I'm trying to access a variable in the structure with:

```
if (*info).active_cursor EQ 1) then .....
```

And I keep getting an error which says "Expression must be a structure in this context: <PtrHeapVar57>."

Does anyone know what I'm doing wrong?

Thanks,
Geoff Herbyinchuk

Subject: Re: Newbie Questions

Posted by [Alex Schuster](#) on Fri, 18 May 2001 11:25:58 GMT

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Geoff Herbyinchuk wrote:

> And, if we do:

>

```
> bar_ptr = ptr_new(bar, /no_copy)
```

>

> bar_ptr will now just point to the memory location where bar is stored

> (not copy it to a heap location)? We can then update the bar, or the

> components of bar(if bar is a structure) by dereferencing bar_ptr,

> right?

Wrong :(With /no_copy, bar becomes undefined, because its value is taken away and being attached directly to bar_ptr.

> For example:

>

```
> *bar_ptr.name = 'Geoff'
```

Caution, this would be (*bar_ptr).name, because bar_ptr is the pointer, not bar_ptr.name.

> Thanks for everyone's help. I've only worked with pointers in

> C/C++ before, and I'm getting the impression that these don't work
> exactly the same way. =)

Correct. In C, they are real pointers to a memory location. In IDL, they are just a heap variable. Tricks like `p=&a`, `*p=5` to set `a` to 5 will not work in IDL.

You can, however, set `bar2_ptr = bar_ptr`, and now at least these two point to the same value, and `*bar2_ptr = 0` also sets `*bar_ptr` to 0.

Alex

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