
Subject: Curious Keywords

Posted by [J.D. Smith](#) on Thu, 27 Feb 1997 08:00:00 GMT

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Hi folks,

A Keyword question:

I was curious how IDL built-ins can distinguish a passed keyword with an undefined variable from a keyword never passed at all, and why this feature is not implemented in the language itself.

E.G. :

I can say (for some undefined variable UNDEF):

```
plot, findgen(100), findgen(100)/99.*2*!PI, POLAR=UNDEF
```

and get a straight line. (Or I can set UNDEF=1 and get a spiral o' Archimedes).

I cannot, however, say:

```
plot, findgen(100), findgen(100)/99.*2*!PI, THICK=UNDEF
```

Since this generates an "a undefined" error message. This implies that plot *knows* I am using the keyword "THICK", even when I am passing an undefined variable -- a possibility which most of us discovered the hard way is not implementable in IDL code. That is, if IDL's plot routine were written in IDL code, the previous call would be equivalent, for all practical purposes, to a call in which the keyword were omitted.

Any thoughts?

JD
