
Subject: Re: keyword_set() NullObject and NullPointer
Posted by [davidf](#) on Fri, 16 Apr 1999 07:00:00 GMT
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Luis (euluis@netscape.net) writes:

> IDL version 5.1.1, Windows
> in the online documentation of keyword_set() isn't referred
> what is the behavior with Null object and Null Pointer.
>
> I've tried and it returns 0, which is good for me, because
> that is the behavior that fits my needs. Because I'm developing
> an complex program and that behavior isn't documented, I'm
> afraid that it could change. Is that possible? Someone from RDI
> told you something?

No one from RDI told be nuttin', but I would be very careful if I were you. Something in the tone of your question leads me to think there is a VERY strong possibility that you are using Keyword_Set for the wrong reason.

Keyword_Set should ONLY be used with keywords that have a binary-type functionality. They are on or off, true or false, yes or no, 0 or 1. Using Keyword_Set for any other purpose will get you into trouble sooner or later.

Having said that, Keyword_Set doesn't behave with pointers exactly the way I would hope it would. The documentation says that Keyword_Set returns a 0 if the argument is 0 or undefined. If the argument is anything else at all, it returns a 1. (Notice it says NOTHING whatsoever about whether the keyword is **used** or not. Nor can it tell you this information. And if you thought it did, you would be mistaken.)

What it does tell you about pointers (and the more I think about it the more I am sure there is NEVER a reason to be using Keyword_Set with pointers) is whether you have a valid pointer or not:

```
a = Ptr_New() ; Null and invalid pointer.  
Print, Keyword_Set(a)  
0
```

```
b = Ptr_New(5) ; Valid pointer.  
Print, Keyword_Set(b)
```

1

```
c = Ptr_New(/Allocate_Heap) ; Valid pointer to undefined variable.  
Print, Keyword_Set(c)  
1
```

Perhaps that is the information you wanted from `Keyword_Set`, but if it is, a much safer way to get it would be to use `Ptr_Valid()`.

Cheers,

David

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