

Accessing ilab, writing, compiling, and running your first C program

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Announcements

Accessing materials

- ▶ Class canvas: <https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/404708>
- ▶ Most of the time, materials are on the Modules page
- ▶ Long range syllabus linked from Canvas:
<https://yipenghuang.com/teaching/2026-fall-211/>

Recitations

- ▶ Recitations start Wednesday, 9/9.
- ▶ More information here:
<https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/404708/pages/recitation-and-office-hour-information>
- ▶ Review the material and get help on the programming assignments.

Accessing ilab, writing, compiling, and running your first C program

Accessing iLab Linux machines

Why use Linux?

Key steps to get going

Accessing the programming assignments

Why study C?

`rootFinder`: A program that prints square roots if integer

Program structure

Opening a file

Reading characters from a file

Control flow

Printing to command line

Compiling and running your program

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Why use Linux?

Do you have Linux? Trick question...

Why use Linux?

- ▶ Stable
- ▶ Open source
- ▶ Flexible: all form factors (wearables, IoT, Raspberry Pi, Roku, Android, laptops, iLab, web hosting, warehouse-scale datacenters)
- ▶ A critical piece of infrastructure for practicing computer science

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Key steps to get going

1. **Activate account:** <https://services.cs.rutgers.edu/accounts/>
2. **Familiarize yourself with CS department infrastructure:** <https://resources.cs.rutgers.edu/docs/new-users/beginners-info/>
3. **Use what you are familiar with to log onto iLab remotely. Command line:** Windows command line, macOS, terminal, PuTTY. **Graphical:** X2Go... <https://resources.cs.rutgers.edu/docs/other/working-at-home/>
4. **Use what you are familiar with to move files. SCP, Filezilla, Cyberduck...** <https://resources.cs.rutgers.edu/docs/file-storage/accessing-files-remotely/>
5. **Use what you are familiar with to edit files. Vim, Emacs, other text editors, VS Code...**

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1. **Canvas:** `https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/404708/assignments/4482127`
2. **GitHub:** `https://github.com/yipenghuang0302/2026\_1f\_211`
3. Cloning a repository
4. git: version control tool; interfaces with github.com

Preview of the plan for programming assignments

1. PA0, 1% of course grade, two week work time
2. PA1, 4% of course grade, two week work time
3. PA2, 10% of course grade, two week work time
4. PA3, 10% of course grade, two week work time
5. PA4, 10% of course grade, two week work time
6. PA5, 10% of course grade, two week work time
7. PA6, 10% of course grade, two week work time

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Why study C?

C is fast

- ▶ C is close to the machine: directly manipulate memory
- ▶ C is compiled
- ▶ C is strongly typed

C is influential

- ▶ C is old
- ▶ C has a relatively short specification
- ▶ Influenced Java, Python, C++, and most major programming languages
- ▶ <https://www.tiobe.com/tiobe-index/>

See one, do one, teach one

To practice programming, you can...

- ▶ Read about it from a book (e.g., Modern C).
- ▶ Listen about it from someone talking about concepts (e.g., lecture slides in Supplementary Reading).
- ▶ Watch someone else program.
- ▶ Practice it.
- ▶ Explain / teach it to a friend.

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rootFinder: A program that prints square roots if integer

- ▶ Headers
- ▶ Command line arguments
- ▶ Opening files
- ▶ Reading from files
- ▶ `printf` and format specifiers
- ▶ `EXIT_SUCCESS`

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Including headers

- ▶ `#include <stdio.h>`
- ▶ `#include <stdlib.h>`
- ▶ `#include <stdbool.h>`
- ▶ `#include <math.h>`

Command line arguments: First encounter with pointers

What is `char* argv[]`

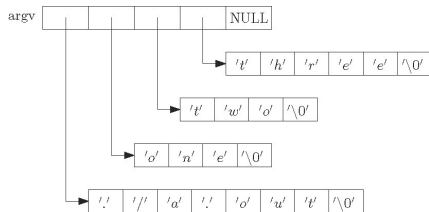


Figure: Image credit: <http://www.csc.villanova.edu/~mdamian>

In C, Strings, `char*`, and `char[]` are all the same

- ▶ `char greeting[6] = {'H','e','l','l','o','\0'};`
- ▶ `char greeting[] = "Hello";`

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Opening a file

The mode in `FILE *fopen(const char *filename, const char *mode)`

- ▶ `"r"`: read from the file
- ▶ `"w"`: write, starting at the beginning of the file
- ▶ `"a"`: write, starting at the end of the file (append)

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Reading characters from a file

- ▶ `int fgetc(FILE *stream)`
- ▶ `char *fgets(char *str, int n, FILE *stream)`
- ▶ `int fscanf(FILE *stream, const char *format, ...)`

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Control flow

- ▶ Conditionals
- ▶ Loops
- ▶ `break;`
- ▶ `continue;`

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Printing to command line

The format string in `printf(char* format, args)`

Format specifiers we care about now:

- ▶ `%d`: integer
- ▶ `%ld`: long integer
- ▶ `%f`: float
- ▶ `%c`: character
- ▶ `%s`: string
- ▶ `%p`: pointer

Comprehensive documentation:

<https://cplusplus.com/reference/cstdio/printf/>

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Compiling and running your program

How does a program end up on your computer?

```
gcc -Wall -Werror -fsanitize=address -std=c99 -o  
rootFinder rootFinder.c -lm
```

- ▶ gcc: GNU C Compiler
- ▶ -Wall -Werror: Enable helpful warnings.
- ▶ -fsanitize=address: Enable memory checking.
- ▶ -std=c99: Set C standard version number.
- ▶ -o rootFinder: Output binary.
- ▶ rootFinder.c: Source file.
- ▶ -lm: Link the math library implementation.

Compiling and running your program

How does a program end up on your computer?

How a Makefile works

- ▶ `$@`: target file name
- ▶ `$<`: first prerequisite
- ▶ `^`: all prerequisites

Assignment infrastructure for this course

Navigating the 2026_1f_211/ assignments directory

- ▶ `autograder.py`
- ▶ `tests/`: test cases
- ▶ `answers/`: expected answers
- ▶ Every assignment part has several fixed test cases for development, several randomized test cases for validation.
- ▶ `assignment_autograder.py`
- ▶ `tar cvf pa0.tar .`