

ProgC Programming Exercise 2025/26

Getting started

In this exercise you are required to understand, modify and write code in C and C++ and to link the two languages together. You will also gain a little exposure to low-level networking primitives, which will be a useful foundation for the networking course.

Please be aware that work submitted for Assessed Exercises must be entirely your own work and that publishing or otherwise sharing answers to exercises risks **you** being penalised for “academic misconduct” if someone plagiarises your work. Never be tempted to submit somebody else’s work instead of your own, partial solution.

To start this exercise, you will need a *starter pack*, that you can fetch from your *tick page*, which is a private webpage that you access with your own personal URL. Details of how to find your tick page will be on the course web page. Your supervisor and DoS can also view your tick page. Your submission, ticking and viva status can also be read from your tick page, which will typically be updated within two working days of a submission. You will receive an automated, preliminary indication of well-formedness from the submission system. You may resubmit as many times as you like, but you must have made a substantially correct submission by the deadline for this Assessed Exercise.

As well as this Exercise Sheet, the starter pack should contain the following files:

<code>server.c</code>	<code>client.c</code>	<code>rfc0791.txt</code>	<code>rfc0793.txt</code>
<code>pcap1.ip</code>	<code>pcap2.ip</code>	<code>pcap3.ip</code>	<code>declaration.txt</code>

Important: You should avoid the use of any compiler-specific features in the exercise. Code written for this exercise should generally conform to ISO9899:2011 (“C11”) or ISO14882:2011 (“C++11”) and use only standard libraries. The code should compile and run correctly using `gcc` or `g++` as available on `cl-student-ssh` Linux. Your code should not generate any warnings, even with all warnings turned on; in other words

```
gcc -std=c11 -Wall --pedantic sourcefile.c
or
g++ -std=c++11 -Wall --pedantic sourcefile.cc
```

should produce no warnings for all source files you submit.

Please note that the automatic inclusion of `stdint.h` that provides, for instance, `uint8_t`, as supported by some compilers, should not be relied on. So please explicitly include that header if using it.

Exercise – Part 1

The exercise starter pack contains two computer programs written in C. The first program, `server.c` transmits data and the second program, `client.c` receives data. There are a few mistakes in these programs which prevent the code from compiling or functioning correctly. Do the following:

1. Describe in fewer than 100 words the intended functionality of the two programs `server.c` and `client.c`. Write this description into the file `answers.txt`. The format of this file should be plain ASCII text or UTF-8 (hence it should not be in unicode, rtf, pdf, word etc.).
2. Find and list three programming errors in the code. (There could in fact be more than three errors, but you only need to document three.) Modify the code to correct the errors. Compile and execute the code with suitable test data. (Hint: Use a port number above 1024 to avoid running as root and the IP address `127.0.0.1` (called localhost) can be used as the IP address if you want to run both the client and server components on the same machine.) A brief description of the three errors should be appended to the file `answers.txt`. Your corrected code should be saved into `server1.c` and `client1.c`.
3. While `server1.c` is running on port 2080, type `localhost:2080/tuesdaynightteachclub` into the address bar of a browser running on the same computer. Add a final, short paragraph in `answers.txt` that explains how the request is being served and how the browser is interpreting the response.

Exercise – Part 2

A computer scientist writes a packet inspector to record every bit of data sent by (a corrected version of) `server.c` on machine A and received by (a corrected version of) `client.c` on machine B. The recorded data contains *all* the TCP/IP packets and includes the TCP and IP headers in *network byte order* together with the actual message payload.

The files `rfc0791.txt` and `rfc0793.txt` contain the specification of IP and TCP headers respectively. Your attention is drawn in particular to the layout, in bytes, of the contents of the header files as expressed in these documents. For convenience, the layouts are also shown in the Appendix.

The computer scientist invokes the server program on machine A and the client program on machine B once, and generates a pcap log file of all the packets sent between the two machines. The log file contains the raw packet data in the order in which the packets were transmitted on machine A. Therefore the first packet is at the start of the file, and this is immediately followed by data from the second packet, and so on.

An example log file is `pcap1.ip`. Your next task is to write a C program to read in *any* log file in this format and determine the following facts:

- The IP addresses of machines A and B (**source** and **destination**)
- The value of the first IP packet's header size field (IHL – IP header length)

- The length of the first IP packet in bytes (`total length`)
- The value of the first TCP packet's header size field (`data offset`)
- The total number of IP packets in the trace.

If you find it easiest, your program can initially be written as one C file. But if so, before submission it should be split into two separately compiled files called `pcolparse.c` and `summary.c`. You must also write `pcolparse.h`, which contain declarations, but no definitions, to be `#include`'d by both C files. The purpose of `pcolparse` is to parse IP protocol packets, encapsulating details of their layout. Moreover, `pcolparse.c` and `pcolparse.h` must be coded in a style such that the object file `pcolparse.o` and `pcolparse.h` itself can be reused, without change, in Part 3 of this Exercise.

Your program should process the pcap file named in its first (and only) argument and output the above details in the same order as shown above by printing to `stdout` on a single line, using spaces to separate the fields. For example, if the IP addresses of machines A and B are `192.168.1.1` and `192.168.1.2`, the header length field value is 6, the length of the IP packet is 52 bytes, the value in the TCP header length is 5, and the total number of packets in the trace is 20, your program should output:

```
192.168.1.1 192.168.1.2 6 52 5 20
```

Ordering the log files provided in the starter pack by filename, run the summary program on the each (using a shell script or otherwise) to create a three-line file called `outputs.txt`.

Exercise – Part 3

The final task is to write a second program, this time in C++, that removes the IP and TCP headers from *any* log file conforming to the format described above and extracts the data transmitted from machine A to machine B. The source code for this program should be saved in `extract.cc`.

Your program must use the `pcolparse` files as a library (i.e. `#include` your `pcolparse.h` and be linked with a `pcolparse.o` file resulting from C compilation of `pcolparse.c`). Note that `pcolparse.h` will need to be written carefully to be usable both by `summary.c` and `extract.cc` as the `extern "C"` form of C++ is not valid C.

To demonstrate linking between C and C++, your files should compile correctly using the pattern exhibited by following three commands:

```
$ gcc -g -c pcolparse.c
$ gcc -g -o summary summary.c pcolparse.o
$ g++ -g -o extract extract.cc pcolparse.o
```

Your `extract` program should take two arguments on the command line, and open and read log data from the filename passed as the first argument, and write data into a file whose name will be passed as the second argument. Your program should print an error message if a file with the name

of the first argument does not exist. Your program should overwrite the data in any file with the same name as the second argument, or create a file of this name if it does not exist. For example, if an executable form of your program was called `extract` then the following execution

```
$ ./extract pcap1.ip message1.txt
```

will extract the TCP payload held in `pcap1.ip` and write it into the file `message1.txt`.

Use your program to extract the content of the three message files, saving their data to three appropriately-suffixed files. Allowable suffixes include `.txt`, `.jpg`, `.png` and `.pdf`. The linux `file` command is one way get a file type indication for an unknown file.

There is no requirement to do anything further, but if you decipher the puzzle from the file content properly, this may lead to a prize for the first few people who report the answer to Student Administration in the Computer Lab. Also, perhaps make a note at the end of `answers.txt`.

Submission

By the end of this tick you should have generated the following files, replacing `.suf` with an appropriate file extension, such as `.txt`, `.pdf`, `.jpg` or `.png` as best suits. (No core files, temporary files, or Makefiles. All of these files and only these files to be submitted, please.)

```
answers.txt AND outputs.txt
client1.c AND server1.c
pcolparse.c AND pcolparse.h AND summary.c
extract.cc
message1.suf, message2.suf AND message3.suf
declaration.txt
```

Make sure you have ‘signed’ the declaration by filling in your details where appropriate. Your `crsid` should appear in the declaration. It should also appear inside at least one comment in each of the C and C++ files. Once you have correctly completed the exercise you should create a folder called `CC++<crsid>-2526` (e.g. `CC++dkg11-2526`) that contains precisely these files. Then please ZIP this folder to generate a single file that must be named `CC++2526.zip`. Submit your tick using Moodle with the link provided on the course web page. Submissions open in November. You must submit before the tick deadline. Marking is semi-automatic, so folder and filenames must be correct, but it may take up to two working days before you see a full response. But Moodle will report straightaway if you have a file missing, misnamed or clearly wrong. For instance, if an extracted file is longer than the pcap file it came from, something is wrong, since no compression is involved.

Resubmissions are encouraged should there be anything wrong, but the last submission before the deadline must be ‘substantially correct’. A randomly selected group of candidates will be required to attend individual viva voce examinations of about 5 minutes duration. Do not copy files from someone else’s starter pack since your files may be watermarked or have slightly different content.

(C) DJG, AM November 2023-25.

Appendix

RFC 791 (<http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc0791.txt>) specifies the layout of packets in the IP Protocol. You may need to read portions of this document in order to complete this exercise. Of particular interest is the position and size of the fields in the IP header:

0										1										2										3																													
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1																												
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
Version										IHL										Type of Service										Total Length																													
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
										Identification										Flags										Fragment Offset																													
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
										Time to Live										Protocol																				Header Checksum																			
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
										Source Address																																																	
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
										Destination Address																																																	
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													
										Options																				Padding																													
+-+										+-+										+-+										+-+																													

RFC 793 (<http://www.ietf.org/rfc/rfc793.html>) specifies the layout of packets using the TCP protocol. You may need to read portions of this document in order to complete this exercise. Of particular interest is the position and size of the key fields in the TCP header:

0										1										2										3																			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1																		
										Source Port																				Destination Port																			
										Sequence Number																																							
										Acknowledgment Number																																							
Data										U A P R S F																																							
Offset										Reserved										R C S S Y I										Window																			
																				G K H T N N																													
										Checksum																				Urgent Pointer																			
										Options																				Padding																			
										data																																							

Note: it is possible to model these structures in C either as a byte array or as a `struct`. Both representations have advantages and disadvantages.