

## Class 14: Documenting Programs and Procedures

**Held:** Tuesday, February 16, 2010

**Summary:** We consider documentation for your programs - Why to write it, when to write it, how to write it.

### Related Pages:

- EBoard.
- Reading: Documenting Your Procedures.

### Notes:

- Reading for tomorrow: Homogeneous Lists.
- Are there any final questions on Exam 1?
- Advance warning: I will not be in class tomorrow. Prof. Weinman will be running class.
- EC for Rosenfield Symposium this week.
- EC for CS Table on Friday.

### Overview:

- The need for documentation.
- The Six P's - a strategy for documenting procedures.
- Practice.

## Documentation

- Why document? Text is often easier to read than code.
- Who is your audience? You have many audiences.
  - People who must *maintain* and *update* your code.
  - People who must *use* your code.
  - People who *incorporate* your code into a bigger package (arguably, these are people who do both of the previous things).
- You write comments *within* code for those who must maintain and update your code. You often also write a *big picture* statement for such folks.
- Most of the comments you write in this class will be for people who are likely to use your code. We call these your *client programmers*.
- For such folks, we focus on *what* your procedures do.

## The Six P's

- I prefer to document procedures for client programmers using a careful system, in which we always describe six aspects of the procedure: The name, the parameters, the purpose, the value the procedure produces, the preconditions, and the postconditions.
- The *Purpose* is intended to give a short, informal, summary of what the procedure does.
- The other three of the first four parameters are used to name things, so that we can refer to them elsewhere.
- The *Preconditions* formalize requirements that must be met in order for the procedure to function correctly.
- The *Postconditions* formalize the results of the procedure. They are often expressed in a combination of mathematics, Scheme, and English.
  
- Remember: The six-P's are supposed to give the *what* not the *how*.
- Remember: Your goal is to provide enough information that the client can use the procedure, but not so much that it overly limits your implementation.

## Practice

- We'll try writing documentation collaboratively for a variety of procedures.
- `(sqrt val)`
- `(rbg-redder val)`
- `(max val1 val2 ... valn)`
- ...

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