SWI-Prolog is a comprehensive and portable implementation of the Prolog programming language. SWI-Prolog aims to be a robust and scalable implementation supporting a wide range of applications. In particular, it ships with a wide range of interface libraries, providing interfaces to other languages, databases, graphics and networking. It provides extensive support for managing HTML/SGML/XML and RDF documents. The system is particularly suited for server applications due to robust support for multi threading and HTTP server libraries. SWI-Prolog is designed in the ‘Edinburgh tradition’. In addition to the ISO Prolog standard it is largely compatible to Quintus, SICStus and YAP Prolog. SWI-Prolog provides a compatibility framework developed in cooperation with YAP and instantiated for YAP, SICStus and IF/Prolog. SWI-Prolog aims at providing a good development environment, including extensive editor support, graphical source-level debugger, autoloading and ‘make’ facility and much more. SWI-Prolog editor and the PDT plugin for Eclipse provide alternative environments. This document gives an overview of the features, system limits and built-in predicates.
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Introduction

This document is a reference manual. That means that it documents the system, but it does not explain the basics of the Prolog language and it leaves many details of the syntax, semantics and built-in primitives undefined where SWI-Prolog follows the standards. This manual is intended for people that are familiar with Prolog. For those not familiar with Prolog, we recommend to start with a Prolog textbook such as [Bratko, 1986], [Sterling & Shapiro, 1986] or [Clocksin & Melish, 1987]. For more advanced Prolog usage we recommend [O’Keefe, 1990].

1.1 Positioning SWI-Prolog

Most implementations of the Prolog language are designed to serve a limited set of use cases. SWI-Prolog is no exception to this rule. SWI-Prolog positions itself primarily as a Prolog environment for ‘programming in the large’ and use cases where it plays a central role in an application, i.e., were it acts as ‘glue’ between components. At the same time, SWI-Prolog aims at providing a productive rapid prototyping environment. Its orientation towards programming in the large is backed up by scalability, compiler speed, program structuring (modules), support for multi threading to accommodate servers, Unicode and interfaces to a large number of document formats, protocols and programming languages. Prototyping is facilitated by good development tools, both for commandline usage as for usage with graphical development tools. Demand loading of predicates from the library and a ‘make’ facility avoids the requirement for using declarations and reduces typing.

SWI-Prolog is traditionally strong in education because it is free and portable, but also because of its compatibility with textbooks and its easy-to-use environment.

Note that these positions do not imply that the system cannot be used with other scenarios. SWI-Prolog is used as an embedded language where it serves as a small rule subsystem in a large application. It is also used as a deductive database. In some cases this is the right choice because SWI-Prolog has features that are required in the application, such as threading or Unicode support. In general though, for example, GNU-Prolog is more suited for embedding because it is small and can compile to native code. XSB is better for deductive databases because it provides advanced resolution techniques (tabling) and ECLiPSe is better at constraint handling.

The syntax and set of built-in predicates is based on the ISO standard [Hodgson, 1998]. Most extensions follow the ‘Edinburgh tradition’ (DEC10 Prolog and C-Prolog) and Quintus Prolog [Qui, 1997]. The infrastructure for constraint programming is based on hProlog [Demoen, 2002]. Some libraries are copied from the YAP\(^1\) system. Together with YAP we developed a portability framework (see section C). This framework has been filled for SICStus Prolog, YAP and IF/Prolog.

\(^1\)http://www.dcc.fc.up.pt/~vsc/Yap/
1.2 Status and releases

This manual describes version 6.2 of SWI-Prolog. SWI-Prolog is widely considered to be a robust and scalable implementation of the Prolog language. It is widely used in education and research. In addition, it is in use for 24 x 7 mission critical commercial server processes. The site http://www.swi-prolog.org is hosted using the SWI-Prolog HTTP server infrastructure. It receives approximately 2.3 million hits and serves approximately 300 Gbytes on manual data and downloads each month. SWI-Prolog applications range from student assignments to commercial applications that count more than one million lines of Prolog code.

SWI-Prolog is has two development tracks. Stable releases have an even minor version number (e.g., 6.2.1) and are released as a branch from the development version at a moment that the development version is considered stable and there is sufficient new functionality to justify a stable release. Stable releases often get a few patch updates to deal with installation issues or major flaws. A new Development version is typically released every couple of weeks as a snapshot of the public git repository. ‘Extra editions’ of the development version may be released after problems that severely hinder user in their progress have been fixed.

Known bugs that are not likely to be fixed soon are described as footnotes in this manual.

1.3 Should I be using SWI-Prolog?

There are a number of reasons why it might be better to choose a commercial, or another free Prolog system:

- **SWI-Prolog comes with no warranties**
  Although the developers or the community often provide a work-around or a fix for a bug, there is no place you can go to for guaranteed support. However, the full source archive is available and can be used to compile and debug SWI-Prolog using free tools on all major platforms. Depending users should ensure access to knowledgeable developers.

- **Performance is your first concern**
  Various free and commercial systems have better performance. But, ‘standard’ Prolog benchmarks disregard many factors that are often critical to the performance of large applications. SWI-Prolog is not good at fast calling of simple predicates and if-then-else selection based on simple built-in tests, but it is fast with dynamic code, meta-calling and predicates that contain large numbers of clauses. Many of SWI-Prolog’s built-in predicates are written in C and have excellent performance.

- **You need features not offered by SWI-Prolog**
  Although SWI-Prolog has many features, it also lacks some important features. The most well know is probably tabling [Freire et al., 1997]. If you require additional features and you have resources, being it financial or expertise, please contact the developers.

On the other hand, SWI-Prolog offers some facilities that are widely appreciated by users:

- **Nice environment**
  SWI-Prolog provides a good commandline environment, including ‘Do What I Mean’, auto-completion, history and a tracer that operates on single key-strokes. The system automatically recompiles modifies parts of the source code using the make/0 command. The system can be
1.4. SUPPORT THE SWI-PROLOG PROJECT

instructed to open an arbitrary editor on the right file and line based on its source database. In ships with various graphical tools and can be combined with SWI-Prolog editor, PDT (Eclipse plugin for Prolog) or GNU-Emacs.

- **Fast compiler**
  Even very large applications can be loaded in seconds on most machines. If this is not enough, there is the Quick Load Format. See qcompile/1 and qsave_program/2.

- **Transparent compiled code**
  SWI-Prolog compiled code can be treated just as interpreted code: you can list it, trace it, etc. This implies you do not have to decide beforehand whether a module should be loaded for debugging or not and the performance of debugged code is close to that of normal operation.

- **Source level debugger**
  The source level debugger provides a good overview of your current location in the search tree, variable bindings, your source code and open choicepoints. Choicepoint inspection provide meaningful insight to both novices and experienced users. Avoiding unintended choicepoints often provides a huge increase in performance and a huge saving in memory usage.

- **Profiling**
  SWI-Prolog offers an execution profiler with either textual output or graphical output. Finding and improving hotspots in a Prolog program may result in huge speedups.

- **Flexibility**
  SWI-Prolog can easily be integrated with C, supporting non-determinism in Prolog calling C as well as C calling Prolog (see section 9). It can also be embedded in external programs (see section 9.5). System predicates can be redefined locally to provide compatibility with other Prolog systems.

- **Threads**
  Robust support for multiple threads may improve performance and is a key enabling factor for deploying Prolog in server applications.

- **Interfaces**
  SWI-Prolog ships with many extension packages that provide robust interfaces to processes, encryption, TCP/IP, TIPC, ODBC, SGML/XML/HTML, RDF, HTTP, graphics and much more.

### 1.4 Support the SWI-Prolog project

You can support the SWI-Prolog project in several ways. Academics are invited to cite one of the publications\(^2\) on SWI-Prolog. Users can help by identifying and/or fixing problems with the code or its documentation.\(^3\) Users can contribute new features or, more lightweight, contribute packs\(^4\). Commercial users may consider contacting the developers\(^5\) to sponsor the development of new features or seek for opportunities to cooperate with the developers or other commercial users.

\(^2\)[http://www.swi-prolog.org/Publications.html](http://www.swi-prolog.org/Publications.html)
\(^3\)[http://www.swi-prolog.org/howto/SubmitPatch.html](http://www.swi-prolog.org/howto/SubmitPatch.html)
\(^4\)[http://www.swi-prolog.org/pack/list](http://www.swi-prolog.org/pack/list)
\(^5\)[mailto:info@swi-prolog.org](mailto:info@swi-prolog.org)
1.5 Implementation history

SWI-Prolog started back in 1986 with the requirement for a Prolog that could handle recursive interaction with the C-language: Prolog calling C and C calling Prolog recursively. In those days Prolog systems were not very aware of their environment and we needed such a system to support interactive applications. Since then, SWI-Prolog’s development has been guided by requests from the user community, especially focussing on (in arbitrary order) interaction with the environment, scalability, (I/O) performance, standard compliance, teaching and the program development environment.

SWI-Prolog is based on a simple Prolog virtual machine called ZIP [Bowen et al., 1983, Neumerkel, 1993] which defines only 7 instructions. Prolog can easily be compiled into this language and the abstract machine code is easily decompiled back into Prolog. As it is also possible to wire a standard 4-port debugger in the virtual machine there is no need for a distinction between compiled and interpreted code. Besides simplifying the design of the Prolog system itself this approach has advantages for program development: the compiler is simple and fast, the user does not have to decide in advance whether debugging is required and the system only runs slightly slower in debug mode compared to normal execution. The price we have to pay is some performance degradation (taking out the debugger from the VM interpreter improves performance by about 20%) and somewhat additional memory usage to help the decompiler and debugger.

SWI-Prolog extends the minimal set of instructions described in [Bowen et al., 1983] to improve performance. While extending this set care has been taken to maintain the advantages of decompilation and tracing of compiled code. The extensions include specialised instructions for unification, predicate invocation, some frequently used built-in predicates, arithmetic, and control (\texttt{;}\texttt{/2}, |\texttt{/2}), if-then (\texttt{->/2}) and negation-by-failure (\texttt{\+/1}).

1.6 Acknowledgements

Some small parts of the Prolog code of SWI-Prolog are modified versions of the corresponding Edinburgh C-Prolog code: grammar rule compilation and \texttt{writef/2}. Also some of the C-code originates from C-Prolog: finding the path of the currently running executable and some of the code underlying \texttt{absolute_file_name/2}. Ideas on programming style and techniques originate from C-Prolog and Richard O’Keefe’s \textit{thief} editor. An important source of inspiration are the programming techniques introduced by Anjo Anjewierden in PCE version 1 and 2.

Our special thanks goes to those who had the fate of using the early versions of this system, suggested extensions or reported bugs. Among them are Anjo Anjewierden, Huub Knops, Bob Wielinga, Wouter Jansweijer, Luc Peerdenman, Eric Nombden, Frank van Harmelen, Bert Rengel.

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2.1 Getting started quickly

2.1.1 Starting SWI-Prolog

Starting SWI-Prolog on Unix

By default, SWI-Prolog is installed as ‘swipl’. The command-line arguments of SWI-Prolog itself and its utility programs are documented using standard Unix man pages. SWI-Prolog is normally operated as an interactive application simply by starting the program:

```
machine% swipl
Welcome to SWI-Prolog ... ...
1 ?-
```

After starting Prolog, one normally loads a program into it using consult/1, which may be abbreviated by putting the name of the program file between square brackets. The following goal loads the file `likes.pl` containing clauses for the predicates `likes/2`:

```
?- [likes].
% likes compiled, 0.00 sec, 17 clauses
true.
?- 
```

After this point, Unix and Windows users unite, so if you are using Unix please continue at section 2.1.2.

Starting SWI-Prolog on Windows

After SWI-Prolog has been installed on a Windows system, the following important new things are available to the user:

- A folder (called directory in the remainder of this document) called `swipl` containing the executables, libraries, etc. of the system. No files are installed outside this directory.

- A program `swipl-win.exe`, providing a window for interaction with Prolog. The program `swipl.exe` is a version of SWI-Prolog that runs in a console window.
2.2. THE USER’S INITIALISATION FILE

- The file-extension .pl is associated with the program swipl-win.exe. Opening a .pl file will cause swipl-win.exe to start, change directory to the directory in which the file-to-open resides and load this file.

The normal way to start with the likes.pl file mentioned in section 2.1.1 is by simply double-clicking this file in the Windows explorer.

2.1.2 Executing a query

After loading a program, one can ask Prolog queries about the program. The query below asks Prolog what food ‘sam’ likes. The system responds with \( X = \langle \text{value} \rangle \) if it can prove the goal for a certain \( X \). The user can type the semi-colon (;) or spacebar\(^1\) if (s)he wants another solution. Use the RETURN key if you do not want to see the more answers. Prolog completes the output a full stop (.) if the user uses the RETURN key or Prolog knows there are no more answers. If Prolog cannot find (more) answers, it writes false. Finally, Prolog can answer using an error message to indicate the query or program contains an error.

```prolog
?- likes(sam, X).
X = dahl ;
X = tandoori ;
...
X = chips.
?- 
```

Note that the answer written by Prolog is a valid Prolog program that, when executed, produces the same set of answers as the original program.\(^2\)

2.2 The user’s initialisation file

After the system initialisation the system consults (see consult/1) the user’s startup file. The base-name of this file follows conventions of the operating system. On MS-Windows, it is the file pl.ini and on Unix systems .plrc. The file is searched using the file_search_path/2 clauses for user_profile. The table below shows the default value for this search-path. The phrase \( \langle \text{appdata} \rangle \) refers to the Windows CSIDL name for the folder. The actual name depends on the Windows language. English versions typically use ApplicationData. See also win_folder/2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Unix</th>
<th>Windows</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td>.</td>
<td>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>home</td>
<td>~</td>
<td>( \langle \text{appdata} \rangle /\text{SWI-Prolog} )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the first startup file is found it is loaded and Prolog stops looking for further startup files. The name of the startup file can be changed with the ‘-f file’ option. If File denotes an absolute path,

\(^1\)On most installations, single-character commands are executed without waiting for the RETURN key.

\(^2\)The SWI-Prolog toplevel differs in several ways from traditional Prolog toplevel. The current toplevel was designed in cooperation with Ulrich Neumerkel.
this file is loaded, otherwise the file is searched for using the same conventions as for the default startup file. Finally, if file is none, no file is loaded.

The installation provides a file customize/dotplrc with (commented) commands that are often used to customize the behaviour of Prolog, such as interfacing to the editor, color selection or history parameters. Many of the development tools provide menu entries for editing the startup file and starting a fresh startup file from the system skeleton.

See also the −s (script) and −F (system-wide initialisation) in section 2.4 and section 2.3.

### 2.3 Initialisation files and goals

Using command-line arguments (see section 2.4), SWI-Prolog can be forced to load files and execute queries for initialisation purposes or non-interactive operation. The most commonly used options are −f file or −s file to make Prolog load a file, −g goal to define an initialisation goal and −t goal to define the top-level goal. The following is a typical example for starting an application directly from the command-line.

```
machine% swipl −s load.pl −g go −t halt
```

It tells SWI-Prolog to load load.pl, start the application using the entry-point go/0 and —instead of entering the interactive top-level— exit after completing go/0. The −q may be used to suppress all informational messages.

In MS-Windows, the same can be achieved using a short-cut with appropriately defined command-line arguments. A typically seen alternative is to write a file run.pl with content as illustrated below. Double-clicking run.pl will start the application.

```
:- [load]. % load program
:- go. % run it
:- halt. % and exit
```

Section 2.10.2 discusses further scripting options and chapter 10 discusses the generation of runtime executables. Runtime executables are a means to deliver executables that do not require the Prolog system.

### 2.4 Command-line options

The full set of command-line options is given below:

--arch

When given as the only option, it prints the architecture identifier (see Prolog flag arch) and exits. See also --dump-runtime-variables. Also available as −arch.

--dump-runtime-variables

When given as the only option, it prints a sequence of variable settings that can be used in shell-scripts to deal with Prolog parameters. This feature is also used by swipl-ld (see section 9.5). Below is a typical example of using this feature. Also available as −dump-runtime-variables.
2.4. COMMAND-LINE OPTIONS

```bash
eval 'swipl --dump-runtime-variables'
c
c -I$PLBASE/include -L$PLBASE/lib/$PLARCH ...
```

The option can be followed by `=sh` to dump in POSIX shell format (default) or `cmd` to dump in MS-Windows cmd.exe compatible format.

`--help`
When given as the only option, it summarises the most important options. Also available as `-h` and `--help`.

`--home=DIR`
Use DIR as home directory. See section 9.6 for details.

`--quiet`
Set the Prolog flag `verbose` to `silent`, suppressing informational and banner messages. Also available as `-q`.

`--nodebug`
Disable debugging. See the `current_prolog_flag/2 flag` `generate_debug_info` for details.

`--nosignals`
Inhibit any signal handling by Prolog, a property that is sometimes desirable for embedded applications. This option sets the flag `signals` to `false`. See section 9.4.21 for details.

`--pldoc`
Start the PlDoc documentation system on a free network port and launch the user’s browser on `http://localhost:<port>`.

`--tty`
Unix only. Switches controlling the terminal for allowing single-character commands to the tracer and `get_single_char/1`. By default manipulating the terminal is enabled unless the system detects it is not connected to a terminal or it is running as a GNU-Emacs inferior process. This flag is sometimes required for smooth interaction with other applications.

`--version`
When given as the only option, it summarises the version and the architecture identifier. Also available as `-v`.

`--win_app`
This option is available only in `swipl-win.exe` and is used for the start-menu item. If causes `plwin` to start in the folder `...\My Documents\Prolog` or local equivalent thereof (see `win_folder/2`). The Prolog subdirectory is created if it does not exist.

`--`
Stops scanning for more arguments, so you can pass arguments for your application after this one. See `current_prolog_flag/2 using the flag argv` for obtaining the command-line arguments.
2.4.1 Controlling the stack-sizes

The default limit for the Prolog stacks is 128Mb on 32-bit and 256Mb on 64-bit hardware. The 128Mb limit on 32-bit system is the highest possible value and the commandline options can thus only be used to lower the limit. On 64-bit systems, the limit can both be reduced and enlarged. See section 2.19. Below are two examples, the first reducing the local stack limit to catch unbounded recursion quickly and the second using a big (32Gb) global limit, which is only possible on 64-bit hardware. Note that setting the limit using the commandline only sets a soft limit. Stack parameters can be changed (both reduced and enlarged) at any time using the predicate `set_prolog_stack/2`.

```
$ swipl -L8m
$ swipl -G32g
```

`-Gsize[kmg]`  
Limit for the global stack (sometimes also called term-stack or heap). This is where compound terms and large numbers live.

`-Lsize[kmg]`  
Limit for the local stack (sometimes also called environment-stack). This is where environments and choice-points live.

`-Tsize[kmg]`  
Limit for the trail stack. This is where we keep track of assignments, so we can rollback on backtracking or exceptions.

2.4.2 Running goals from the commandline

`-g goal`  
`Goal` is executed just before entering the top level. Default is a predicate which prints the welcome message. The welcome message can be suppressed with --quiet, but also with `-g true`. `goal` can be a complex term. In this case quotes are normally needed to protect it from being expanded by the shell. A safe way to run a goal non-interactively is here:

```
% swipl <options> -g go,halt -t 'halt(1)'
```

`-t goal`  
Use `goal` as interactive top-level instead of the default goal `prolog/0`. `goal` can be a complex term. If the top-level goal succeeds SWI-Prolog exits with status 0. If it fails the exit status is 1. If the toplevel raises an exception, this is printed as an uncaught error and the toplevel is restarted. This flag also determines the goal started by `break/0` and `abort/0`. If you want to stop the user from entering interactive mode start the application with `--g goal` and give 'halt' as top-level.

2.4.3 Compiler options

`-c file ...`  
Compile files into an ‘intermediate code file’. See section 2.10.
2.4. COMMAND-LINE OPTIONS

-\texttt{o} \textit{output}

Used in combination with \texttt{-c} or \texttt{-b} to determine output file for compilation.

-\texttt{o}

Optimised compilation. See \texttt{current\_prolog\_flag/2 flag optimise} for details.

-\texttt{s file}

Use \textit{file} as a script-file. The script file is loaded after the initialisation file specified with the \texttt{-f file} option. Unlike \texttt{-f file}, using \texttt{-s} does not stop Prolog from loading the personal initialisation file.

-\texttt{f file}

Use \textit{file} as initialisation file instead of the default .plrc (Unix) or pl.ini (Windows). \texttt{-f none} stops SWI-Prolog from searching for a startup file. This option can be used as an alternative to \texttt{-s file} that stops Prolog from loading the personal initialisation file. See also section 2.2.

-\texttt{F script}

Selects a startup-script from the SWI-Prolog home directory. The script-file is named \langle \textit{script} \rangle.rc. The default \textit{script} name is deduced from the executable, taking the leading alphanumerical characters (letters, digits and underscore) from the program-name. \texttt{-F none} stops looking for a script. Intended for simple management of slightly different versions. One could for example write a script iso.rc and then select ISO compatibility mode using \texttt{pl -F iso} or make a link from iso-pl to pl.

-\texttt{x bootfile}

Boot from \textit{bootfile} instead of the system’s default boot file. A bootfile is a file resulting from a Prolog compilation using the \texttt{-b} or \texttt{-c} option or a program saved using \texttt{qsave program/[1,2]}.

-\texttt{p alias=path1[:path2 . . . ]}

Define a path alias for \textit{file\_search\_path}. \textit{alias} is the name of the alias, \textit{path1} ... is a list of values for the alias. On Windows the list-separator is ;. On other systems it is :. A value is either a term of the form alias(value) or pathname. The computed aliases are added to \textit{file\_search\_path/2} using \texttt{asserta/1}, so they precede predefined values for the alias. See \textit{file\_search\_path/2} for details on using this file-location mechanism.

2.4.4 Maintenance options

The following options are for system maintenance. They are given for reference only.

-\texttt{b initfile ... -c file ...}

Boot compilation. \textit{initfile} ... are compiled by the C-written bootstrap compiler, \textit{file} ... by the normal Prolog compiler. System maintenance only.

-\texttt{d token1,token2,...}

Print debug messages for DEBUG statements tagged with one of the indicated tokens. Only has effect if the system is compiled with the \texttt{-DO,DEBUG} flag. System maintenance only.
2.5 GNU Emacs Interface

Unfortunately the default Prolog mode of GNU-Emacs is not very good. There are several alternatives though:

- http://turing.ubishops.ca/home/bruda/emacs-prolog/
- http://stud4.tuwien.ac.at/e0225855/ediprolog/ediprolog.html
- http://stud4.tuwien.ac.at/e0225855/pceprolog/pceprolog.html
- http://stud4.tuwien.ac.at/e0225855/etrace/etrace.html

2.6 Online Help

SWI-Prolog provides an online help system that covers this manual. If the XPCE graphics system is available, online help opens a graphical window. Otherwise the documentation is shown in the Prolog console. The help system is controlled by the predicates below. Note that this only help system only covers the core SWI-Prolog manual. The website\(^3\) provides an integrated manual that covers the core system as well as all standard extension packages. It is possible to install the SWI-Prolog website locally by cloning the website repository git://www.swi-prolog.org/home/pl/git/plweb.git and follow the instructions in the README file.

**help**

Equivalent to help(help/1).

**help(+What)**

Show specified part of the manual. **What** is one of: 

- \(\langle\text{Name}\rangle/\langle\text{Arity}\rangle\) Give help on specified predicate
- \(\langle\text{Name}\rangle\) Give help on named predicate with any arity or C interface function with that name
- \(\langle\text{Section}\rangle\) Display specified section. Section numbers are dash-separated numbers: 2-3 refers to section 2.3 of the manual. Section numbers are obtained using apropos/1.

Examples:

?- help(assert). Give help on predicate assert
?- help(3-4). Display section 3.4 of the manual
?- help('PL_retry'). Give help on interface function PL_retry()

See also apropos/1 and the SWI-Prolog home page at http://www.swi-prolog.org, which provides a FAQ, an HTML version of the manual for online browsing, and HTML and PDF versions for downloading.

**apropos(+Pattern)**

Display all predicates, functions and sections that have **Pattern** in their name or summary description. Lowercase letters in **Pattern** also match a corresponding uppercase letter. Example:

\(^3\)http://www.swi-prolog.org
SWI-Prolog 6.2 Reference Manual

## 2.7 Command-line history

SWI-Prolog offers a query substitution mechanism similar to what is seen in Unix shells. The availability of this feature is controlled by `set_prolog_flag/2`, using the `history` Prolog flag. By default, history is available if the Prolog flag `readline` is `false`. To enable this feature, remembering the last 50 commands, put the following into your startup file (see section 2.2):

```prolog
:- set_prolog_flag(history, 50).
```

The history system allows the user to compose new queries from those typed before and remembered by the system. The available history commands are shown in table 2.1. History expansion is not done if these sequences appear in quoted atoms or strings.

### Table 2.1: History commands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Command</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>!.</code></td>
<td>Repeat last query</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>!nr.</code></td>
<td>Repeat query numbered <code>&lt;nr&gt;</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>!str.</code></td>
<td>Repeat last query starting with <code>&lt;str&gt;</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>h.</code></td>
<td>Show history of commands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>!h.</code></td>
<td>Show this list</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: History commands

```prolog
?- apropos(file).
```

Display predicates, functions and sections that have ‘file’ (or ‘File’, etc.) in their summary description.

### `explain(+ToExplain)`

Give an explanation on the given ‘object’. The argument may be any Prolog data object. If the argument is an atom, a term of the form `Name/Arity` or a term of the form `Module:Name/Arity`, `explain/1` describes the predicate as well as possible references to it. See also `gxref/0`.

### `explain(+ToExplain, -Explanation)`

Unify `Explanation` with an explanation for `ToExplain`. Backtracking yields further explanations.

## 2.8 Reuse of top-level bindings

Bindings resulting from the successful execution of a top-level goal are asserted in a database if they are not too large. These values may be reused in further top-level queries as `$Var`. If the same variable name is used in a subsequent query the system associates the variable with the latest binding. Example:

Note that variables may be set by executing `=/2`:

```prolog
6 ?- X = statistics.
X = statistics.
7 ?- $X.
```
2.9 Overview of the Debugger

SWI-Prolog has a 6-port tracer, extending the standard 4-port tracer [Byrd, 1980, Clocksin & Melish, 1987] with two additional ports. The optional unify port allows the user to inspect the result after unification of the head. The exception port shows exceptions raised by throw/1 or one of the built-in predicates. See section 4.10.

The standard ports are called call, exit, redo, fail and unify. The tracer is started by the trace/0 command, when a spy point is reached and the system is in debugging mode (see spy/1 and debug/0) or when an exception is raised that is no caught.

The interactive top-level goal trace/0 means “trace the next query”. The tracer shows the port, displaying the port name, the current depth of the recursion and the goal. The goal is printed using the Prolog predicate write_term/2. The style is defined by the Prolog flag debugger_print_options and can be modified using this flag or using the w, p and d commands of the tracer.

On leashed ports (set with the predicate leash/1, default are call, exit, redo and fail) the user is prompted for an action. All actions are single character commands which are executed without waiting for a return, unless the command-line option -tty is active. Tracer options:

+ (Spy)
  Set a spy point (see spy/1) on the current predicate.
2.9. OVERVIEW OF THE DEBUGGER

min_numlist([H|T], Min) :-
    min_numlist(T, H, Min).

min_numlist([], Min, Min).
min_numlist([H|T], Min0, Min) :-
    Min1 is min(H, Min0),
    min_numlist(T, Min1, Min).

1 ?- visible(+all), leash(-exit).
   true.

2 ?- trace, min_numlist([3, 2], X).
   Call: (7) min_numlist([3, 2], _G0) ? creek
   Unify: (7) min_numlist([3, 2], _G0)
   Call: (8) min_numlist([2], 3, _G0) ? creek
   Unify: (8) min_numlist([2], 3, _G0)
   ^ Call: (9) _G54 is min(2, 3) ? creek
   ^ Exit: (9) 2 is min(2, 3)
   Call: (9) min_numlist([], 2, _G0) ? creek
   Unify: (9) min_numlist([], 2, 2)
   Exit: (9) min_numlist([], 2, 2)
   Exit: (8) min_numlist([2], 3, 2)
   Exit: (7) min_numlist([3, 2], 2)
   X = 2.

Figure 2.2: Example trace of the program above showing all ports. The lines marked ^ indicate calls to transparent predicates. See section 5.
- **(No spy)**
  Remove the spy point (see `nospy/1`) from the current predicate.

/ **(Find)**
Search for a port. After the '/', the user can enter a line to specify the port to search for. This line consists of a set of letters indicating the port type, followed by an optional term, that should unify with the goal run by the port. If no term is specified it is taken as a variable, searching for any port of the specified type. If an atom is given, any goal whose functor has a name equal to that atom matches. Examples:

```
/f  Search for any fail port
/fe solve  Search for a fail or exit port of any goal with name solve
/c solve(a, _)  Search for a call to solve/2 whose first argument is a variable or the atom a
/a member(_, _)  Search for any port on member/2. This is equivalent to setting a spy point on member/2.
```

. **(Repeat find)**
Repeat the last find command (see '/').

A **(Alternatives)**
Show all goals that have alternatives.

C **(Context)**
Toggle ‘Show Context’. If on, the context module of the goal is displayed between square brackets (see section 5). Default is off.

L **(Listing)**
List the current predicate with `listing/1`.

a **(Abort)**
Abort Prolog execution (see `abort/0`).

b **(Break)**
Enter a Prolog break environment (see `break/0`).

c **(Creep)**
Continue execution, stop at next port. (Also return, space).

d **(Display)**
Set the `max_depth(Depth)` option of `debugger_print_options`, limiting the depth to which terms are printed. See also the `w` and `p` options.

e **(Exit)**
Terminate Prolog (see `halt/0`).

f **(Fail)**
Force failure of the current goal.
2.10. Compilation

2.10.1 During program development

During program development, programs are normally loaded using the list abbreviation (?-[load].). It is common practice to organise a project as a collection of source files and a load-file, a

\[\text{This implies the system can run out of stack in debug mode, while no problems arise when running in non-debug mode.}\]
Prolog file containing only use_module/[1,2] or ensure_loaded/1 directives, possibly with a definition of the entry-point of the program, the predicate that is normally used to start the program. This file is often called load.pl. If the entry-point is called go, a typical session starts as:

```
% swipl
<banner>
1 ?- [load].
<compilation messages>
true.
2 ?- go.
<program interaction>
```

When using Windows, the user may open load.pl from the Windows explorer, which will cause swipl-win.exe to be started in the directory holding load.pl. Prolog loads load.pl before entering the top-level. If Prolog is started from an interactive shell, one may choose the type swipl -s load.pl.

### 2.10.2 For running the result

There are various options if you want to make your program ready for real usage. The best choice depends on whether the program is to be used only on machines holding the SWI-Prolog development system, the size of the program and the operating system (Unix vs. Windows).

#### Using PrologScript

A Prolog source file can be used directly as a Unix program using the Unix `#!` magic start. The same mechanism is useful for specifying additional parameters for running a Prolog file on Windows. The Unix `#!` magic is allowed because if the first letter of a Prolog file is `#`, the first line is treated as comment. To create a Prolog script, make the first line start like this:

```
#!/path/to/swipl ⟨options⟩ -s
```

Prolog recognises this starting sequence and causes the interpreter to receive the following argument-list:

```
/path/to/swipl ⟨options⟩ -s ⟨script⟩ -- ⟨ScriptArguments⟩
```

Instead of `-s`, the user may use `-f` to stop Prolog from looking for a personal initialisation file. Here is a simple script doing expression evaluation:

```
#!/usr/bin/swipl -q -t main -f

eval :-
```

---

5 The `#`-sign can be the legal start of a normal Prolog clause. In the unlikely case this is required, leave the first line blank or add a header-comment.
current_prolog_flag(argv, Argv),
append(_, [--|Args], Argv),
concat_atom(Args, ＇ ＇, SingleArg),
term_to_atom(Term, SingleArg),
Val is Term,
format('˜w˜n', [Val]).

main :-
catch(eval, E, (print_message(error, E), fail)),
halt.
main :-
halt(1).

And here are two example runs:

% eval 1+2
3
% eval foo
ERROR: Arithmetic: ‘foo/0’ is not a function
%

The Windows version supports the #! construct too, but here it serves a rather different role. The Windows shell already allows the user to start Prolog source files directly through the Windows file-type association. However, Windows makes it rather complicated to provide additional parameters for opening an individual Prolog file. If the file starts with #!, the first line is analysed to obtain additional commandline arguments. The example below runs the system in ‘quiet’ mode.

#!/usr/bin/swipl -q -s
....

Note the use of /usr/bin/swipl, which specifies the interpreter. This argument is ignored in the Windows version, but must be present to ensure best cross-platform compatibility.

Creating a shell-script

With the introduction of PrologScript (see section 2.10.2), using shell-scripts as explained in this section has become redundant for most applications.

Especially on Unix systems and not-too-large applications, writing a shell-script that simply loads your application and calls the entry-point is often a good choice. A skeleton for the script is given below, followed by the Prolog code to obtain the program arguments.

#!/bin/sh

base=<absolute-path-to-source>
PL=swipl

exec $PL -q -f '$base/load -t go -- **

go :-
    current_prolog_flag(argv, Arguments),
append(_SytemArgs, [--|Args], Arguments), !,
    go(Args).

go(Args) :-
    ... 

On Windows systems, similar behaviour can be achieved by creating a shortcut to Prolog, passing the proper options or writing a .bat file.

Creating a saved-state

For larger programs, as well as for programs that are required to run on systems that do not have the SWI-Prolog development system installed, creating a saved state is the best solution. A saved state is created using qsave_program/[1,2] or the -c commandline option. A saved state is a file containing machine-independent intermediate code in a format dedicated for fast loading. Optionally, the emulator may be integrated in the saved state, creating a single-file, but machine-dependent, executable. This process is described in chapter 10.

Compilation using the -c command-line option

This mechanism loads a series of Prolog source files and then creates a saved-state as qsave_program/2 does. The command syntax is:

% swipl [option ...] [-o output] -c file.pl ...

The options argument are options to qsave_program/2 written in the format below. The option-names and their values are described with qsave_program/2.

--option-name=option-value

For example, to create a stand-alone executable that starts by executing main/0 and for which the source is loaded through load.pl, use the command

% swipl --goal=main --stand_alone=true -o myprog -c load.pl

This performs exactly the same as executing

---

6The saved state does not depend on the CPU instruction set or endianness. Saved states for 32- and 64-bits are not compatible. Typically, saved states only run on the same version of Prolog on which they have been created.
2.11 Environment Control (Prolog flags)

The predicates `current_prolog_flag/2` and `set_prolog_flag/2` allow the user to examine and modify the execution environment. It provides access to whether optional features are available on this version, operating system, foreign-code environment, command-line arguments, version, as well as runtime flags to control the runtime behaviour of certain predicates to achieve compatibility with other Prolog environments.

`current_prolog_flag(?Key, -Value)`  
ISO
The predicate `current_prolog_flag/2` defines an interface to installation features: options compiled in, version, home, etc. With both arguments unbound, it will generate all defined Prolog flags. With ‘Key’ instantiated, it unifies the value of the Prolog flag. Flag values are typed. Flags marked as `bool` can have the values `true` and `false`. Some Prolog flags are not defined in all versions, which is normally indicated in the documentation below as “if present and true”. A boolean Prolog flag is true iff the Prolog flag is present and the `Value` is the atom `true`. Tests for such flags should be written as below.

```prolog
(current_prolog_flag(windows, true) -> <Do MS-Windows things>)
```

Some Prolog flags are scoped to a source file. This implies that if they are set using a directive inside a file, the flag value encountered when loading of the file started is restored when loading of the file is completed. Currently, the following flags are scoped to the source file: `generate_debug_info` and `optimise`.

A new thread (see section 8) copies all flags from the thread that created the new thread (its `parent`).\(^7\) As a consequence, modifying a flag inside a thread does not affect other threads.

`access_level (atom, changeable)`

This flag defines a normal ‘user’ view (`user`, default) or a ‘system’ view. In system view all system code is fully accessible as if it was normal user code. In user view, certain

\(^7\)This is implemented using the copy-on-write technique.
operations are not permitted and some details are kept invisible. We leave the exact consequences undefined, but for example system code can be traced using system access and system predicates can be redefined.

**address_bits (integer)**
Address-size of the hosting machine. Typically 32 or 64. Except for the maximum stack limit, this has few implications to the user. See also the Prolog flag **arch**.

**age_margin (integer, changeable)**
If this amount of atoms has been created since the last atom garbage collection, perform atom garbage collection at the first opportunity. Initial value is 10,000. May be changed. A value of 0 (zero) disables atom garbage collection. See also **PL_register_atom()**.

**allow_variable_name_as_functor (bool, changeable)**
If true (default is false), Functor(arg) is read as if it was written 'Functor'(arg). Some applications use the Prolog read/1 predicate for reading an application defined script language. In these cases, it is often difficult to explain to non-Prolog users of the application that constants and functions can only start with a lowercase letter. Variables can be turned into atoms starting with an uppercase atom by calling read_term/2 using the option variable_names and binding the variables to their name. Using this feature, F(x) can be turned into valid syntax for such script languages. Suggested by Robert van Engelen. SWI-Prolog specific.

**argv (list)**
List is a list of atoms representing the command-line arguments used to invoke SWI-Prolog. Please note that all arguments are included in the list returned.

**arch (atom)**
Identifier for the hardware and operating system SWI-Prolog is running on. Used to select foreign files for the right architecture. See also section 9.2.3 and file_search_path/2.

**associate (atom, changeable)**
On Windows systems, this is set to the filename extension (pl (default) or pro (can be selected in the installer)) associated with swipl-win.exe.

**autoload (bool, changeable)**
If true (default) autoloading of library functions is enabled.

**backquoted_string (bool, changeable)**
If true (default false), read translates text between backquotes into a string object (see section 4.23). This flag is mainly for compatibility with LPA Prolog.

**bounded (bool)**
ISO Prolog flag. If true, integer representation is bound by min_integer and max_integer. If false integers can be arbitrarily large and the min_integer and max_integer are not present. See section 4.26.2.

**break_level (integer)**
Current break-level. The initial toplevel (started with -t) has value 0. See break/0. This flag is absent from threads that are not running a toplevel loop.

**c_cc (atom, changeable)**
Name of the C-compiler used to compile SWI-Prolog. Normally either gcc or cc. See section 9.5.
c_cflags (atom, changeable)
  CFLAGS used to compile SWI-Prolog. See section 9.5.

c_ldflags (atom, changeable)
  LDFLAGS used to link SWI-Prolog. See section 9.5.

c_libs (atom, changeable)
  Libraries needed to link executables that embed SWI-Prolog. Typically -lswipl if the
  SWI-Prolog kernel is a shared (DLL). If the SWI-Prolog kernel is in a static library, this
  flag also contains the dependencies.

c_libplso (atom, changeable)
  Libraries needed to link extensions (shared object, DLL) to SWI-Prolog. Typically empty
  on ELF systems and -lswipl on COFF based systems. See section 9.5.

char_conversion (bool, changeable)
  Determines whether character-conversion takes place while reading terms. See also
  char_conversion/2.

character_escapes (bool, changeable)
  If true (default), read/1 interprets \ escape sequences in quoted atoms and strings.
  May be changed. This flag is local to the module in which it is changed.

colon_sets_calling_context (bool)
  Using the construct ⟨module⟩:⟨goal⟩ sets the calling context for executing ⟨goal⟩. This
  flag is defined by ISO/IEC 13211-2 (Prolog modules standard). See section 5.

compile_meta_arguments (atom, changeable)
  Experimental flag that controls compilation of arguments passed to meta-calls marked ‘0’
  or ‘^’ (see meta_predicate/1). Supported values are:

  false
    (default). Meta-arguments are passed verbatim.

  control
    Compile meta-arguments that contain control-structures ((A,B), (A;B), (A-¿B;C),
    etc.). If not compiled at compile-time, such arguments are compiled to a temporary
    clause before execution. Using this option enhances performance of processing
    complex meta-goals that are known at compile-time.

  true
    Also compile references to normal user-predicates. This harms performance (a lit-
    tle), but enhances the power of poor-mens consistency check used by make/0 and
    implemented by list(undefined)/0.

  always
    Always create an intermediate clause, even for system predicates. This prepares for a
    replacing the normal head of the generated predicate with a special reference (similar
    to database-references as used by e.g., assert/2) that provides direct access to the
    executable code, thus avoiding runtime lookup of predicates for meta-calling.

compiled_at (atom)
  Describes when the system has been compiled. Only available if the C-compiler used to
  compile SWI-Prolog provides the _DATE_ and _TIME_ macros.

console_menu (bool)
  Set to true in swipl-win.exe to indicate the console supports menus. See also
  section 4.33.2.
**cpu_count** *(integer, changeable)*

Number of physical CPUs or cores in the system. The flag is marked read-write both to allow pretending the system has more or less processors. See also thread_setconcurrency/2 and the library thread. This flag is not available on systems were we do not know how to get the number of CPUs.

**dde** *(bool)*

Set to true if this instance of Prolog supports DDE as described in section 4.41.

**debug** *(bool, changeable)*

Switch debugging mode on/off. If debug mode is activated the system traps encountered spy-points (see spy/1) and trace-points (see trace/1). In addition, last-call optimisation is disabled and the system is more conservative in destroying choice points to simplify debugging.

Disabling these optimisations can cause the system to run out of memory on programs that behave correctly if debug mode is off.

**debug_on_error** *(bool, changeable)*

If true, start the tracer after an error is detected. Otherwise just continue execution. The goal that raised the error will normally fail. See also fileerrors/2 and the Prolog flag report_error. May be changed. Default is true, except for the runtime version.

**debugger_print_options** *(term, changeable)*

This argument is given as option-list to write_term/2 for printing goals by the debugger. Modified by the ‘w’, ‘p’ and ‘⟨N⟩d’ commands of the debugger. Default is [quoted(true), portray(true), max_depth(10), attributes(portray)].

**debugger_show_context** *(bool, changeable)*

If true, show the context module while printing a stack-frame in the tracer. Normally controlled using the ‘C’ option of the tracer.

**dialect** *(atom)*

Fixed to swi. The code below is a reliable and portable way to detect SWI-Prolog.

```prolog
is_dialect(swi) :-
    catch(current_prolog_flag(dialect, swi), _, fail).
```

**double_quotes** *(codes,chars,atom,string, changeable)*

This flag determines how double quoted strings are read by Prolog and is —like character_escapes— maintained for each module. If codes (default), a list of character-codes is returned, if chars a list of one-character atoms, if atom double quotes are the same as single-quotes and finally, string reads the text into a Prolog string (see section 4.23). See also atom_chars/2 and atom_codes/2.

**editor** *(atom, changeable)*

Determines the editor used by edit/1. See section 4.5 for details on selecting the editor used.

**emacs_inferior_process** *(bool)*

If true, SWI-Prolog is running as an inferior process of (GNU/X-)Emacs. SWI-Prolog assumes this is the case if the environment variable EMACS is t and INFERIOR is yes.
encoding (atom, changeable)
  Default encoding used for opening files in text mode. The initial value is deduced from
  the environment. See section 2.18.1 for details.

executable (atom)
  Path-name of the running executable. Used by qsave_program/2 as default emulator.

file_name_variables (bool, changeable)
  If true (default false), expand $varname and ~ in arguments of built-in predicates
  that accept a file name (open/3, exists_file/1, access_file/2, etc.). The
  predicate expand_file_name/2 can be used to expand environment variables and
  wildcard patterns. This Prolog flag is intended for backward compatibility with older
  versions of SWI-Prolog.

gc (bool, changeable)
  If true (default), the garbage collector is active. If false, neither garbage-collection, nor
  stack-shifts will take place, even not on explicit request. May be changed.

generate_debug_info (bool, changeable)
  If true (default) generate code that can be debugged using trace/0, spy/1, etc. Can
  be set to false using the -nodebug. This flag is scoped within a source file. Many of
  the libraries have :- set_prolog_flag(generate_debug_info, false) to
  hide their details from a normal trace.\textsuperscript{8}

gmp_version (integer)
  If Prolog is linked with GMP, this flag gives the major version of the GMP library used.
  See also section 9.4.8.

gui (bool)
  Set to true if XPCE is around and can be used for graphics.

history (integer, changeable)
  If integer > 0, support Unix csh(1) like history as described in section 2.7. Otherwise,
  only support reusing commands through the command-line editor. The default is to set
  this Prolog flag to 0 if a command-line editor is provided (see Prolog flag readline)
  and 15 otherwise.

home (atom)
  SWI-Prolog’s notion of the home-directory. SWI-Prolog uses its home directory to find
  its startup file as ⟨home⟩/boot32.prc (32-bit machines) or ⟨home⟩/boot64.prc
  (64-bit machines) and to find its library as ⟨home⟩/library.

hwnd (integer)
  In swipl-win.exe, this refers to the MS-Windows window-handle of the console
  window.

integer_rounding_function (down,toward_zero)
  ISO Prolog flag describing rounding by \(\text{//}\) and \(\text{rem}\) arithmetic functions. Value depends
  on the C-compiler used.

iso (bool, changeable)
  Include some weird ISO compatibility that is incompatible with normal SWI-Prolog
  behaviour. Currently it has the following effect:

\textsuperscript{8}In the current implementation this only causes a flag to be set on the predicate that causes children to be hidden from
the debugger. The name anticipates on further changes to the compiler.
• The \(/\) (float division) always return a float, even if applied to integers that can be divided.
• In the standard order of terms (see section 4.7.1), all floats are before all integers.
• atom_length/2 yields a type error if the first argument is a number.
• clause/[2,3] raises a permission error when accessing static predicates.
• abolish/[1,2] raises a permission error when accessing static predicates.
• Syntax is closer to the ISO standard.
  – Unquoted commas and bars appearing as atoms are not allowed. Instead of \(f(,,a)\) now write \(f(\ ,\ ,a)\). Unquoted commas can only be used to separate arguments in functional notation and list notation, and as a conjunction operator. Unquoted bars can only appear within lists to separate head and tail like \([\text{Head}|\text{Tail}]\), and as infix operator for alternation in grammar rules like \(a \rightarrow b \mid c\).
  – Within functional notation and list notation terms must have priority below 1000. That means that rules and control constructs appearing as arguments need bracketing. A term like \([a :- b, c]\). must now be disambiguated to mean \([\{a :- b\}, c]\). or \([\{a :- b\}, c]\).
  – Operators appearing as operands must be bracketed. Instead of \(X == -, \text{true}\). write \(X == (\), \text{true}\). Currently, this is not entirely enforced.
  – Backslash-escaped newlines are interpreted according to the ISO standard. See section 2.15.1.

large_files (bool)
If present and \(\text{true}\), SWI-Prolog has been compiled with large file support (LFS) and is capable to access files larger than 2GB on 32-bit hardware. Large file-support is default on installations built using configure that support it and may be switched off using the configure option \(--\text{disable-largefile}\).

last_call_optimisation (bool, changeable)
Determines whether or not last-call optimisation is enabled. Normally the value of this flag is the negation of the debug flag. As programs may run out of stack if last-call optimisation is omitted, it is sometimes necessary to enable it during debugging.

max arity (unbounded)
ISO Prolog flag describing there is no maximum arity to compound terms.

max integer (integer)
Maximum integer value if integers are bounded. See also the flag bounded and section 4.26.2.

max tagged integer (integer)
Maximum integer value represented as a ‘tagged’ value. Tagged integers require 1 word storage. Larger integers are represented as ‘indirect data’ and require significantly more space.

min integer (integer)
Minimum integer value if integers are bounded. See also the flag bounded and section 4.26.2.
2.11. ENVIRONMENT CONTROL (PROLOG FLAGS)

**min_tagged_integer** *(integer)*
Start of the tagged-integer value range.

**occurs_check** *(atom, changeable)*
This flag controls unification that creates an infinite tree (also called cyclic term) and can have three values. Using false (default), unification succeeds, creating an infinite tree. Using true, unification behaves as unify_with_occurs_check/2, failing silently. Using error, an attempt to create a cyclic term results in an occurs_check exception. The latter is intended for debugging unintentional creations of cyclic terms. Note that this flag is a global flag modifying fundamental behaviour of Prolog. Changing the flag from its default may cause libraries to stop functioning properly.

**open_shared_object** *(bool)*
If true, open_shared_object/2 and friends are implemented, providing access to shared libraries (.so files) or dynamic link libraries (.DLL files).

**optimise** *(bool, changeable)*
If true, compile in optimised mode. The initial value is true if Prolog was started with the -O command-line option. The optimise flag is scoped to a source file. Currently optimise compilation implies compilation of arithmetic, and deletion of redundant true/0 that may result from expand_goal/2. Later versions might imply various other optimisations such as integrating small predicates into their callers, eliminating constant expressions and other predictable constructs. Source code optimisation is never applied to predicates that are declared dynamic (see dynamic/1).

**pid** *(int)*
Process identifier of the running Prolog process. Existence of this flag is implementation defined.

**pipe** *(bool, changeable)*
If true, open(pipe(command), mode, Stream), etc. are supported. Can be changed to disable the use of pipes in applications testing this feature. Not recommended.

**preprocessor** *(atom, changeable)*
Current preprocessor. See preprocessor/2. The reserved atom none (default) implies no preprocessor.

**prompt_alternatives_on** *(atom, changeable)*
Determines prompting for alternatives in the Prolog toplevel. Default is determinism, which implies the system prompts for alternatives if the goal succeeded while leaving choicepoints. Many classical Prolog systems behave as groundness: they prompt for alternatives if and only if the query contains variables.

**qcompile** *(atom, changeable)*
This option provides the default for the qcompile(+Atom) option of load_files/2.

**readline** *(bool)*
If true, SWI-Prolog is linked with the readline library. This is done by default if you have this library installed on your system. It is also true for the Win32 swipl-win.exe version of SWI-Prolog, which realises a subset of the readline functionality.

**resource_database** *(atom)*
Set to the absolute-filename of the attached state. Typically this is the file boot32.prc, the file specified with -x or the running executable. See also resource/3.
**report_error** *(bool, changeable)*

If `true`, print error messages, otherwise suppress them. May be changed. See also the `debug_on_error` Prolog flag. Default is `true`, except for the runtime version.

**runtime** *(bool)*

If present and `true`, SWI-Prolog is compiled with `-DO_RUNTIME`, disabling various useful development features (currently the tracer and profiler).

**saved_program** *(bool)*

If present and `true`, Prolog has been started from a state saved with `qsave_program/1,2`.

**shared_object_extension** *(atom)*

Extension used by the operating system for shared objects. `.so` for most Unix systems and `.dll` for Windows. Used for locating files using the `file_type executable`. See also `absolute_file_name/3`.

**shared_object_search_path** *(atom)*

Name of the environment variable used by the system to search for shared objects.

**signals** *(bool)*

Determine whether Prolog is handling signals (software interrupts). This flag is `false` if the hosting OS does not support signal handling or the command-line option `-nosignals` is active. See section 9.4.21 for details.

**stream_type_check** *(atom, changeable)*

Defines whether and how strictly the system validates that byte IO should not be applied to text-streams and text IO should not be applied to binary streams. Values are `false` (no checking), `true` (full checking) and `loose`. Using checking mode `loose` (default), the system accepts byte I/O from text stream that use ISO Latin-1 encoding and accepts writing text to binary streams.

**system_thread_id** *(int)*

Available in multi-threaded version (see section 8) where the operating system provides system-wide integer thread identifiers. The integer is the thread-identifier used by the operating system for the calling thread. See also `thread_self/1`.

**timezone** *(integer)*

Offset in seconds west of GMT of the current timezone. Set at initialization time from the `timezone` variable associated with the POSIX `tzset()` function. See also `convert_time/2`.

**toplevel_print_anon** *(bool, changeable)*

If `true`, top-level variables starting with an underscore (_) are printed normally. If `false` they are hidden. This may be used to hide bindings in complex queries from the top-level.

**toplevel_print_factorized** *(bool, changeable)*

If `true` (default `false`) show the internal sharing of subterms in the answer substitution. The example below reveals internal sharing of leaf-nodes in red-black trees as implemented by the `rbtrees predicate rb_new/1`:

```prolog
?- set_prolog_flag(toplevel_print_factorized, true).
?- rb_new(X).
X = t(_S1, _S1), % where
    _S1 = black(’,’ , _G387 , _G388 , ’’).
```
If this flag is `false`, the `% where` notation is still used to indicate cycles as illustrated below. This example also shows that the implementation reveals the internal cycle length, and not the minimal cycle length. Cycles of different length are indistinguishable in Prolog (as illustrated by `S == R`).

```
?- S = s(S), R = s(s(R)), S == R.
S = s(S),
R = s(s(R)).
```

toplevel_print_options (term, changeable)

This argument is given as option-list to `write_term/2` for printing results of queries. Default is `[quoted(true), portray(true), max_depth(10), attributes(portray)]`.

toplevel_prompt (atom, changeable)

Define the prompt that is used by the interactive toplevel. The following `~` (tilde) sequences are replaced:

- `~m` *Type in module if not user* (see `module/1`)
- `~l` *Break level if not 0* (see `break/0`)
- `~d` *Debugging state* if not normal execution (see `debug/0`, `trace/0`)
- `~!` *History event* if history is enabled (see flag `history`)

toplevel_var_size (int, changeable)

Maximum size counted in literals of a term returned as a binding for a variable in a top-level query that is saved for re-use using the `$` variable reference. See section 2.8.

trace_gc (bool, changeable)

If `true` (`false` is the default), garbage collections and stack-shifts will be reported on the terminal. May be changed. Values are reported in bytes as $G+T$, where $G$ is the global stack value and $T$ the trail stack value. ‘Gained’ describes the number of bytes reclaimed. ‘used’ the number of bytes on the stack after GC and ‘free’ the number of bytes allocated, but not in use. Below is an example output.

```
% GC: gained 236,416+163,424 in 0.00 sec;
    used 13,448+5,808; free 72,568+47,440
```

tty_control (bool, changeable)

Determine whether the terminal is switched to raw mode for `get_single_char/1`, which also reads the user-actions for the trace. May be set. See also the +/-tty command-line option.

unix (bool)

If present and `true`, the operating system is some version of Unix. Defined if the C-compiler used to compile this version of SWI-Prolog either defines `__unix__` or `unix`. On other systems this flag is not available.

unknown (fail,warning,error, changeable)

Determine the behaviour if an undefined procedure is encountered. If `fail`, the predicate fails silently. If `warn`, a warning is printed, and execution continues as if the predicate was not defined and if `error` (default), an existence_error exception is
raised. This flag is local to each module and inherited from the module’s *import-module*. Using default setup, this implies that normal modules inherit the flag from user, which in turn inherits the value error from system. The user may change the flag for module user to change the default for all application modules or for a specific module. It is strongly advised to keep the error default and use dynamic/1 and/or multifile/1 to specify possible non-existence of a predicate.

**user\_flags (Atom, changeable)**
Define the behaviour of `set_prolog_flag/2` if the flag is not known. Values are silent, warning and error. The first two create the flag on-the-fly, where warning prints a message. The value error is consistent with ISO: it raises an existence error and does not create the flag. See also `create_prolog_flag/3`. The default is silent, but future versions may change that. Developers are encouraged to use another value and ensure proper use of `create_prolog_flag/3` to create flags for their library.

**verbose (Atom, changeable)**
This flag is used by `print_message/2`. If its value is silent, messages of type informational and banner are suppressed. The -q switches the value from the initial normal to silent.

**verbose\_autoload (bool, changeable)**
If true the normal consult message will be printed if a library is autoloaded. By default this message is suppressed. Intended to be used for debugging purposes.

**verbose\_load (atom, changeable)**
Determines messages printed for loading (compiling) Prolog files. Current values are full, normal (default) and silent. The value of this flag is normally controlled by the option `silent`(`Bool`) provided by `load_files/2`.

**verbose\_file\_search (bool, changeable)**
If true (default false), print messages indicating the progress of `absolute_file_name/[2,3]` in locating files. Intended for debugging complicated file-search paths. See also `file_search_path/2`.

**version (integer)**
The version identifier is an integer with value:

$$10000 \times \text{Major} + 100 \times \text{Minor} + \text{Patch}$$

Note that in releases up to 2.7.10 this Prolog flag yielded an atom holding the three numbers separated by dots. The current representation is much easier for implementing version-conditional statements.

**version\_data (swi(Major, Minor, Patch, Extra))**
Part of the dialect compatibility layer; see also the Prolog flag `dialect` and section C. Extra provides platform-specific version information. Currently it is simply unified to [].

**version\_git (atom)**
Available if created from a git repository. See `git-describe` for details.

**warn\_override\_implicit\_import (bool, changeable)**
If true (default), a warning is printed if an implicitly imported predicate is clobbered by a local definition. See `use_module/1` for details.
windows (bool)
If present and true, the operating system is an implementation of Microsoft Windows
(NT/2000/XP, etc.). This flag is only available on MS-Windows based versions.

write_attributes (atom, changeable)
Defines how write/1 and friends write attributed variables. The option values are
described with the attributes option of write_term/3. Default is ignore.

write_help_with_overstrike (bool)
Internal flag used by help/1 when writing to a terminal. If present and true it prints
bold and underlined text using overstrike.

xpce (bool)
Available and set to true if the XPCE graphics system is loaded.

xpce_version (atom)
Available and set to the version of the loaded XPCE system.

set_prolog_flag (:Key, +Value)  [ISO]
Define a new Prolog flag or change its value. Key is an atom. If the flag is a system-
defined flag that is not marked changeable above, an attempt to modify the flag yields
a permission_error. If the provided Value does not match the type of the flag, a
type_error is raised.

Some flags (e.g., unknown) are maintained on a per-module basis. The addressed module is
determined by the Key argument.

In addition to ISO, SWI-Prolog allows for user-defined Prolog flags. The type of the flag is de-
determined from the initial value and cannot be changed afterwards. Defined types are boolean
(if the initial value is one of false, true, on or off), atom if the initial value is any other
atom, integer if the value is an integer that can be expressed as a 64-bit signed value. Any
other initial value results in an untyped flag that can represent any valid Prolog term.

The behaviour when Key denotes a non-existent key depends on the Prolog flag
user_flags. The default is to define them silently. New code is encouraged to use
create_prolog_flag/3 for portability.

create_prolog_flag (+Key, +Value, +Options)  [YAP]
Create a new Prolog flag. The ISO standard does not foresee creation of new flags, but many
libraries introduce new flags. Options is a list of the following options:

access(+Access)
Define access-rights for the flag. Values are read_write and read_only. The default
is read_write.

type(+Atom)
Define a type-restriction. Possible values are boolean, atom, integer, float and
term. The default is determined from the initial value. Note that term restricts the term
to be ground.

This predicate behaves as set_prolog_flag/2 if the flag already exists. See also
user_flags.
2.12 An overview of hook predicates

SWI-Prolog provides a large number of hooks, mainly to control handling messages, debugging, startup, shut-down, macro-expansion, etc. Below is a summary of all defined hooks with an indication of their portability.

- **portray/1**
  Hook into write_term/3 to alter the way terms are printed (ISO).

- **message_hook/3**
  Hook into print_message/2 to alter the way system messages are printed (Quintus/SICStus).

- **message_property/2**
  Hook into print_message/2 that defines prefix, output stream, color, etc.

- **library_directory/1**
  Hook into absolute_file_name/3 to define new library directories (most Prolog systems).

- **file_search_path/2**
  Hook into absolute_file_name/3 to define new search-paths (Quintus/SICStus).

- **termExpansion/2**
  Hook into load_files/2 to modify read terms before they are compiled (macro-processing) (most Prolog systems).

- **goalExpansion/2**
  Same as termExpansion/2 for individual goals (SICStus).

- **prolog:load_file/2**
  Hook into load_files/2 to load other data-formats for Prolog sources from ‘non-file’ resources. The load_files/2 predicate is the ancestor of consult/1, use_module/1, etc.

- **prolog:edit:locate/3**
  Hook into edit/1 to locate objects (SWI).

- **prolog:edit:edit_source/1**
  Hook into edit/1 to call an internal editor (SWI).

- **prolog:edit:edit_command/2**
  Hook into edit/1 to define the external editor to use (SWI).

- **prolog:list_goal/1**
  Hook into the tracer to list the code associated to a particular goal (SWI).

- **prolog:trace_interception/4**
  Hook into the tracer to handle trace-events (SWI).

- **prolog:debug_control_hook/1**
  Hook in spy/1, nospy/1, nospyall/0 and debugging/0 to extend these control-predicates to higher-level libraries.

- **prolog:help_hook/1**
  Hook in help/0, help/1 and apropos/1 to extend the help-system.

- **resource/3**
  Defines a new resource (not really a hook, but similar) (SWI).
2.13 Automatic loading of libraries

If —at runtime— an undefined predicate is trapped, the system will first try to import the predicate from the module’s default module (see section 5.9). If this fails the auto loader is activated.\(^9\) On first activation an index to all library files in all library directories is loaded in core (see library_directory/1, file_search_path/2 and reload_library_index/0). If the undefined predicate can be located in one of the libraries, that library file is automatically loaded and the call to the (previously undefined) predicate is restarted. By default this mechanism loads the file silently. The current_prolog_flag/2 key verbose_autoload is provided to get verbose loading. The Prolog flag autoload can be used to enable/disable the autoload system.

Autoloading only handles (library) source files that use the module mechanism described in chapter 5. The files are loaded with use_module/2 and only the trapped undefined predicate is imported into the module where the undefined predicate was called. Each library directory must hold a file INDEX.pl that contains an index to all library files in the directory. This file consists of lines of the following format:

```
index(Name, Arity, Module, File).
```

The predicate make/0 updates the autoload index. It searches for all library directories (see library_directory/1 and file_search_path/2) holding the file MKINDEX.pl or INDEX.pl. If the current user can write or create the file INDEX.pl and it does not exist or is older than the directory or one of its files, the index for this directory is updated. If the file MKINDEX.pl exists updating is achieved by loading this file, normally containing a directive calling make_library_index/2. Otherwise make_library_index/1 is called, creating an index for all *.pl files containing a module.

Below is an example creating an indexed library directory.

```
% mkdir ~/lib/prolog
% cd ~/lib/prolog
% swipl -g true -t 'make_library_index(.)'
```

If there is more than one library file containing the desired predicate, the following search schema is followed:

1. If there is a library file that defines the module in which the undefined predicate is trapped, this file is used.

2. Otherwise library files are considered in the order they appear in the library_directory/1 predicate and within the directory alphabetically.

\(^9\)Actually, the hook user:exception/3 is called; only if this hook fails it calles the autoloader.
autoload_path(+DirAlias)

Add DirAlias to the libraries that are used by the autoloader. This extends the search path and reloads the library index. For example:

```prolog
:- autoload_path(library(http)).
```

If this call appears as a directive, it is term-expanded into a clause for user:file_search_path/2 and a directive calling reload_library_index/0. This keeps source information and allows for removing this directive.

make_library_index(+Directory)

Create an index for this directory. The index is written to the file 'INDEX.pl' in the specified directory. Fails with a warning if the directory does not exist or is write protected.

make_library_index(+Directory, +ListOfPatterns)

Normally used in MKINDEX.pl, this predicate creates INDEX.pl for Directory, indexing all files that match one of the file-patterns in ListOfPatterns.

Sometimes library packages consist of one public load file and a number of files used by this load-file, exporting predicates that should not be used directly by the end-user. Such a library can be placed in a sub-directory of the library and the files containing public functionality can be added to the index of the library. As an example we give the XPCE library’s MKINDEX.pl, including the public functionality of trace/browse.pl to the autoloadable predicates for the XPCE package.

```prolog
:- make_library_index('.',
[ '*.pl',
  'trace/browse.pl'
]).
```

reload_library_index

Force reloading the index after modifying the set of library directories by changing the rules for library_directory/1, file_search_path/2, adding or deleting INDEX.pl files. This predicate does not update the INDEX.pl files. Check make_library_index/[1,2] and make/0 for updating the index files.

Normally, the index is reloaded automatically if a predicate cannot be found in the index and the set of library directories has changed. Using reload_library_index/0 is necessary if directories are removed or the order of the library directories is changed.

When creating an executable using either qsave_program/2 or the -c command line options, it is necessary to load all predicates that would normally be autoloaded explicitly. This is discussed in section 10. See autoload/0.

2.14 Garbage Collection

SWI-Prolog provides garbage-collection, last-call optimization and atom garbage collection. These features are controlled using Prolog flags (see current_prolog_flag/2).
2.15 Syntax Notes

SWI-Prolog syntax is close to ISO-Prolog standard syntax, which is closely compatible with Edinburgh Prolog syntax. A description of this syntax can be found in the Prolog books referenced in the introduction. Below are some non-standard or non-common constructs that are accepted by SWI-Prolog:

- /* ... */ ...*/
  The /* ... */ comment statement can be nested. This is useful if some code with /* ... */ comment statements in it should be commented out.

2.15.1 ISO Syntax Support

SWI-Prolog offers ISO compatible extensions to the Edinburgh syntax.

Processor Character Set

The processor character set specifies the class of each character used for parsing Prolog source text. Character classification is fixed to use UCS/Unicode as provided by the C-library wchar_t based primitives. See also section 2.18.

Character Escape Syntax

Within quoted atoms (using single quotes: ‘<atom>’) special characters are represented using escape sequences. An escape sequence is led in by the backslash (\) character. The list of escape sequences is compatible with the ISO standard but contains some extensions, and the interpretation of numerically specified characters is slightly more flexible to improve compatibility. Undefined escape characters raise a syntax_error exception.\10

\a Alert character. Normally the ASCII character 7 (beep).
\b Backspace character.
\c No output. All input characters up to but not including the first non-layout character are skipped. This allows for the specification of pretty-looking long lines. Not supported by ISO. Example:

```
format(‘This is a long line that looks better if it was \c split across multiple physical lines in the input’)```

\NEWLINE When in ISO mode (see the Prolog flag iso), only skip this sequence. In native mode, whitespace that follows the newline are skipped as well and a warning is printed, indicating that this construct is deprecated and advising to use \c. We advise using \c or putting the layout before the \, as shown below. Using \c is supported by various other Prolog implementations

\10Up to SWI-Prolog 6.1.9, undefined escape characters were copied verbatim, i.e., removing the backslash.
and will remain supported by SWI-Prolog. The style shown below is the most compatible solution.\footnote{Future versions will interpret \verb|
| according to ISO.}


\begin{verbatim}
format(’This is a long line that looks better if it was \ split across multiple physical lines in the input’)
\end{verbatim}

instead of

\begin{verbatim}
format(’This is a long line that looks better if it was\ split across multiple physical lines in the input’)
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{\textbackslash e}

Escape character (ASCII 27). Not ISO, but widely supported.

\texttt{\textbackslash f}

Form-feed character.

\texttt{\textbackslash n}

Next-line character.

\texttt{\textbackslash r}

Carriage-return only (i.e., go back to the start of the line).

\texttt{\textbackslash s}

Space character. Intended to allow writing \verb|0’ \textbackslash s| to get the character code of the space character. Not ISO.

\texttt{\textbackslash t}

Horizontal tab-character.

\texttt{\textbackslash v}

Vertical tab-character (ASCII 11).

\texttt{\textbackslash xXX...}

Hexadecimal specification of a character. The closing \ is obligatory according to the ISO standard, but optional in SWI-Prolog to enhance compatibility with the older Edinburgh standard. The code \texttt{\textbackslash xa \textbackslash 3} emits the character 10 (hexadecimal ‘a’) followed by ‘3’. Characters specified this way are interpreted as Unicode characters. See also \texttt{\textbackslash u}.

\texttt{\textbackslash uXXXX}

Unicode character specification where the character is specified using exactly 4 hexadecimal digits. This is an extension to the ISO standard fixing two problems. First of all, where \texttt{\textbackslash x} defines a numeric character code, it doesn’t specify the character set in which the character should be interpreted. Second, it is not needed to use the idiosyncratic closing \ ISO Prolog syntax.

\texttt{\textbackslash UXXXXXXXX}

Same as \texttt{\textbackslash uXXXX}, but using 8 digits to cover the whole Unicode set.
2.15. SYNTAX NOTES

\40
Octal character specification. The rules and remarks for hexadecimal specifications apply to octal specifications as well.

\\Escapes the backslash itself. This, ‘\\’ is an atom consisting of a single \.

\quote
If the current quote (" or ’) is preceded by a backslash, it is copied verbatim. Thus, ‘\’’ and ‘’’ both describe the atom with a single ’.

Character escaping is only available if current_prolog_flag(character_escapes, true) is active (default). See current_prolog_flag/2. Character escapes conflict with writef/2 in two ways: \40 is interpreted as decimal 40 by writef/2, but as octal 40 (decimal 32) by read. Also, the writef/2 sequence \l is illegal. It is advised to use the more widely supported format/[2,3] predicate instead. If you insist upon using writef/2, either switch character_escapes to false, or use double \\, as in writef(‘\\l’).

Syntax for non-decimal numbers

SWI-Prolog implements both Edinburgh and ISO representations for non-decimal numbers. According to Edinburgh syntax, such numbers are written as ⟨radix⟩⟨number⟩, where ⟨radix⟩ is a number between 2 and 36. ISO defines binary, octal and hexadecimal numbers using 0[bxo]⟨number⟩. For example: A is 0b100 \/ 0xf00 is a valid expression. Such numbers are always unsigned.

Unicode Prolog source

The ISO standard specifies the Prolog syntax in ASCII characters. As SWI-Prolog supports Unicode in source files, we must extend the syntax. This section describes the implication for the source files, while writing international source files is described in section 3.1.3.

The SWI-Prolog Unicode character classification is based on version 6.0.0 of the Unicode standard. Please note that char_type/2 and friends, intended to be used with all text except Prolog source code, is based on the C-library locale-based classification routines.

• Quoted atoms and strings
Any character of any script can be used in quoted atoms and strings. The escape sequences \uXXXX and \UXXXXXXXX (see section 2.15.1) were introduced to specify Unicode code points in ASCII files.

• Atoms and Variables
We handle them in one item as they are closely related. The Unicode standard defines a syntax for identifiers in computer languages.\footnote{http://www.unicode.org/reports/tr31/} In this syntax identifiers start with ID_Start followed by a sequence of ID_Continue codes. Such sequences are handled as a single token in SWI-Prolog. The token is a variable iff it starts with an uppercase character or an underscore (_). Otherwise it is an atom. Note that many languages do not have the notion of character-case. In such languages variables must be written as _name.

• White space
All characters marked as separators (Z*) in the Unicode tables are handled as layout characters.
• **Control and unassigned characters**
  Control and unassigned (C*) characters produce a syntax error if encountered outside quoted atoms/strings and outside comments.

• **Other characters**
  The first 128 characters follow the ISO Prolog standard. Unicode symbol and punctuation characters (general category S* and P*) act as glueing symbol characters (i.e., just like ==: an unquoted sequence of symbol characters are combined into an atom).

Other characters (this is mainly No: a numeric character of other type) are currently handled as ‘solo’.

**Singleton variable checking**

A **singleton variable** is a variable that appears only one time in a clause. It can always be replaced by _, the anonymous variable. In some cases however people prefer to give the variable a name. As mistyping a variable is a common mistake, Prolog systems generally give a warning (controlled by `style_check/1`) if a variable is used only once. The system can be informed a variable is known to appear once by starting it with an underscore. E.g. _Name. Please note that any variable, except plain _, shares with variables of the same name. The term t (_, X, _X) is equivalent to t (X, X), which is different from t (_, _, _).

As Unicode requires variables to start with an underscore in many languages this schema needs to be extended.\(^\text{13}\) First we define the two classes of named variables.

• **Named singleton variables**
  Named singletons start with a double underscore (__) or a single underscore followed by an uppercase letter. E.g. __var or _Var.

• **Normal variables**
  All other variables are ‘normal’ variables. Note this makes _var a normal variable.\(^\text{14}\)

Any normal variable appearing exactly once in the clause and any named singleton variables appearing more than once are reported. Below are some examples with warnings in the right column. Singleton messages can be suppressed using the `style_check/1` directive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Singleton variables:</th>
<th>Singleton-marked variables appearing more than once:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>test(_,).</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_a).</td>
<td>[.a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_12).</td>
<td>[.12]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(A).</td>
<td>[A]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_A).</td>
<td>[A]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_a).</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_ - _).</td>
<td>[_. _]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_a, _a).</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_a, _,a).</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(_a, _a).</td>
<td>[_.a]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(A, _A).</td>
<td>[A]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>test(A, A).</td>
<td>[A]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{13}\) After a proposal by Richard O’Keefe.

\(^{14}\) Some Prolog dialects write variables this way.
2.16 Rational trees (cyclic terms)

SWI-Prolog supports rational trees, also known as cyclic terms. ‘Supports’ is defined that most relevant built-in predicates terminate when faced with rational trees. Almost all SWI-Prolog’s built-in term manipulation predicates process terms in a time that is linear to the amount of memory used to represent the term on the stack. The following set of predicates safely handles rational trees:

\[
=../2, \quad ==/2, \quad @=/2, \quad =/2, \quad @</2, \quad @=</2, \quad @>/2, \quad \\text{acyclic_term}/1, \quad \text{bagof}/3, \quad \text{compare}/3, \quad \text{copy_term}/2, \quad \text{cyclic_term}/1, \quad \text{dif}/2, \quad \text{duplicate_term}/2, \quad \text{findall}/3, \quad \text{ground}/1, \quad \text{term_hash}/2, \quad \text{numbervars}/[3,4], \quad \text{recorda}/3, \quad \text{recordz}/3, \quad \text{setof}/3, \quad \text{subsumes_term}/2, \quad \text{term_variables}/2, \quad \text{throw}/1, \quad \text{unify_with_occurs_check}/2, \quad \text{unifiable}/3, \quad \text{when}/2, \quad \text{write}/1\]

(and related predicates).

In addition, some built-ins recognise rational trees and raise an appropriate exception. Arithmetic evaluation belongs to this group. The compiler (asserta/1, etc.) also raises an exception. Future versions may support rational trees. Predicates that could provide meaningful processing of rational trees raise a representation_error. Predicates for which rational trees have no meaningful interpretation raise a type_error. For example:

1 ?- A = f(A), asserta(a(A)).
ERROR: asserta/1: Cannot represent due to ‘cyclic_term’
2 ?- A = 1+A, B is A.
ERROR: is/2: Type error: ‘expression’ expected, found
‘@(S_1,[S_1=1+S_1])’ (cyclic term)

2.17 Just-in-time clause indexing

SWI-Prolog provides ‘just-in-time’ indexing over multiple arguments. Just-in-time means that clause indexes are not built by the compiler (or asserta/1 for dynamic predicates), but on the first call to such a predicate where an index might help (i.e., a call where at least one argument is instantiated). This section describes the rules used by the indexing logic. Note that this logic is not ‘set in stone’. The indexing capabilities of the system will change. Although this inevitably leads to some regressing on some particular use cases, we strive to avoid significant slowdowns.

The list below describes the clause selection process for various predicates and calls. The alternatives are considered in the order they are presented.

- **Special purpose code**
  Currently two special cases are recognised by the compiler: static code with exactly one clause and static code with two clauses, one where the first argument is the empty list ([]) and one where the first argument is a non-empty list ([_|_]).

- **Linear scan on first argument**
  The principal clause list maintains a key for the first argument. An indexing key is either a constant or a functor (name/arity reference). Calls with an instantiated first argument and less than 10 clauses perform a linear scan for a possible matching clause using this index key.

15 JIT indexing was added in version 5.11.29 (Oct. 2011).
• **Hash lookup**

If none of the above applies, the system considers the available hash tables for which the corresponding argument is instantiated. If a table is found with acceptable characteristics, it is used. Otherwise, there are two cases. First, if no hash table is available for the instantiated arguments, it assesses the clauses for all instantiated arguments and selects the best candidate for creating a hash table. Arguments that cannot be indexed are flagged to avoid repeated scanning. Second, if there is a hash table for an indexed argument but it has poor characteristics, the system scans other instantiated arguments to see whether it can create a better hash table. The system maintains a bit vector on each table in which is marks arguments that are less suitable than the argument to which the table belongs.

Clauses that have a variable at an otherwise indexable argument must be linked into all hash buckets. Currently, predicates that have more than 10% such clauses for a specific argument are not considered for indexing on that argument.

Disregarding variables, the suitability of an argument for hashing is expressed as the number of unique indexable values divided by the standard deviation of the number of duplicate values for each value plus one.

The indexes of dynamic predicates are deleted if the number of clauses is doubled since its creation or reduced below 1/4th. The JIT approach will recreate a suitable index on the next call. Indexes of running predicates cannot be deleted. They are added to a ‘removed index list’ associated to the predicate. Dynamic predicates maintain a counter for the number of goals running the predicate (a predicate can ‘run’ multiple times due to recursion, open choice-points and it can run in multiple threads) and destroy removed indexes if this count drops to zero. Outdated indexes of static predicates (e.g., due to reconsult or enlarging multifile predicates) are reclaimed by garbage_collect_clauses/0.

### 2.17.1 Future directions

- The current indexing system is largely prepared for secondary indexes. This implies that if there are many clauses that match a given key, the system could (JIT) create a secondary index. This secondary index could exploit another argument or, if the key denotes a functor, an argument inside the compound term.

- The ‘special cases’ can be extended. This is notably attractive for static predicates with a relatively small number of clauses where a hash lookup is too costly.

### 2.17.2 Indexing and portability

The base-line functionality of Prolog implementations provide indexing on constants and functor (name/arity) on the first argument. This must be your assumption if wide portability of your program is important. This can typically be achieved by exploiting term_hash/2 or term_hash/4 and/or maintaining multiple copies of a predicate with reordered arguments and wrappers that update all implementations (assert/retract) and selects the appropriate implementation (query).

YAP provides full JIT indexing, including indexing arguments of compound terms. YAP’s indexing has been the inspiration for enhancing SWI-Prolog’s indexing capabilities.

---

16Earlier versions simply used the number of unique values, but poor distribution of values makes a table less suitable. This was analysed by Fabien Noth and Günter Kniesel.
2.18 Wide character support

SWI-Prolog supports wide characters, characters with character codes above 255 that cannot be represented in a single byte. Universal Character Set (UCS) is the ISO/IEC 10646 standard that specifies a unique 31-bit unsigned integer for any character in any language. It is a superset of 16-bit Unicode, which in turn is a superset of ISO 8859-1 (ISO Latin-1), a superset of US-ASCII. UCS can handle strings holding characters from multiple languages, and character classification (uppercase, lowercase, digit, etc.) and operations such as case conversion are unambiguously defined.

For this reason SWI-Prolog has two representations for atoms and string objects (see section 4.23). If the text fits in ISO Latin-1, it is represented as an array of 8-bit characters. Otherwise the text is represented as an array of 32-bit numbers. This representational issue is completely transparent to the Prolog user. Users of the foreign language interface as described in chapter 9 sometimes need to be aware of these issues though.

Character coding comes into view when characters of strings need to be read from or written to file or when they have to be communicated to other software components using the foreign language interface. In this section we only deal with I/O through streams, which includes file I/O as well as I/O through network sockets.

2.18.1 Wide character encodings on streams

Although characters are uniquely coded using the UCS standard internally, streams and files are byte (8-bit) oriented and there are a variety of ways to represent the larger UCS codes in an 8-bit octet stream. The most popular one, especially in the context of the web, is UTF-8. Bytes 0 ... 127 represent simply the corresponding US-ASCII character, while bytes 128 ... 255 are used for multi-byte encoding of characters placed higher in the UCS space. Especially on MS-Windows the 16-bit Unicode standard, represented by pairs of bytes, is also popular.

Prolog I/O streams have a property called encoding which specifies the used encoding that influences get_code/2 and put_code/2 as well as all the other text I/O predicates.

The default encoding for files is derived from the Prolog flag encoding, which is initialised from the environment. If the environment variable LANG ends in "UTF-8", this encoding is assumed. Otherwise the default is text and the translation is left to the wide-character functions of the C-library. The encoding can be specified explicitly in load_files/2 for loading Prolog source with an alternative encoding, open/4 when opening files or using set_stream/2 on any open stream. For Prolog source files we also provide the encoding/1 directive that can be used to switch between encodings that are compatible with US-ASCII (ascii, iso_latin_1, utf8 and many locales). See also section 3.1.3 for writing Prolog files with non-US-ASCII characters and section 2.15.1 for syntax issues. For additional information and Unicode resources, please visit http://www.unicode.org/.

SWI-Prolog currently defines and supports the following encodings:

octet
Default encoding for binary streams. This causes the stream to be read and written fully untranslated.

ascii
7-bit encoding in 8-bit bytes. Equivalent to iso_latin_1, but generates errors and warnings on encountering values above 127.

---

17 The Prolog native UTF-8 mode is considerably faster than the generic mbtowc() one.
iso_latin_1

8-bit encoding supporting many western languages. This causes the stream to be read and written fully untranslated.

text

C-library default locale encoding for text files. Files are read and written using the C-library functions mbtowc() and wcrtomb(). This may be the same as one of the other locales, notably it may be the same as iso_latin_1 for western languages and utf8 in a UTF-8 context.

utf8

Multi-byte encoding of full UCS, compatible with ascii. See above.

unicode_be

Unicode Big Endian. Reads input in pairs of bytes, most significant byte first. Can only represent 16-bit characters.

unicode_le

Unicode Little Endian. Reads input in pairs of bytes, least significant byte first. Can only represent 16-bit characters.

Note that not all encodings can represent all characters. This implies that writing text to a stream may cause errors because the stream cannot represent these characters. The behaviour of a stream on these errors can be controlled using set_stream/2. Initially the terminal stream writes the characters using Prolog escape sequences while other streams generate an I/O exception.

BOM: Byte Order Mark

From section 2.18.1, you may have got the impression that text files are complicated. This section deals with a related topic, making life often easier for the user, but providing another worry to the programmer. BOM or Byte Order Marker is a technique for identifying Unicode text files as well as the encoding they use. Such files start with the Unicode character 0xFEFF, a non-breaking, zero-width space character. This is a pretty unique sequence that is not likely to be the start of a non-Unicode file and uniquely distinguishes the various Unicode file formats. As it is a zero-width blank, it even doesn’t produce any output. This solves all problems, or . . .

Some formats start off as US-ASCII and may contain some encoding mark to switch to UTF-8, such as the encoding="UTF-8" in an XML header. Such formats often explicitly forbid the use of a UTF-8 BOM. In other cases there is additional information revealing the encoding, making the use of a BOM redundant or even illegal.

The BOM is handled by SWI-Prolog open/4 predicate. By default, text files are probed for the BOM when opened for reading. If a BOM is found, the encoding is set accordingly and the property bom(true) is available through stream_property/2. When opening a file for writing, writing a BOM can be requested using the option bom(true) with open/4.

2.19 System limits

2.19.1 Limits on memory areas

SWI-Prolog has a number of memory areas which are only enlarged to a certain limit. The internal data representation limits the local-, global- and trail-stack to 128 Mbytes on 32 bit processors, or
more generally to $2^{\text{bits-per-pointer}} - 5$ bytes. Considering that almost all modern hardware can deal with this amount of memory with ease, the default limits are set to their maximum on 32-bit hardware. The representation limits can easily exceed physical memory on 64-bit hardware. The default limits on 64-bit hardware are double of 32-bit hardware, which allows for storing the same amount of (Prolog) data.

The limits can be changed from the command line as well as at runtime using `set_prolog_stack/2`. The table below shows these areas. The first column gives the option name to modify the size of the area. The option character is immediately followed by a number and optionally by a k or m. With k or no unit indicator, the value is interpreted in Kbytes (1024 bytes), with m, the value is interpreted in Mbytes (1024 x 1024 bytes).

The PrologScript facility described in section 2.10.2 provides a mechanism for specifying options with the load file. On Windows the default stack sizes are controlled using the Windows registry on the key HKEY_CURRENT_USER\Software\SWI\Prolog using the names localSize, globalSize and trailSize. The value is a DWORD expressing the default stack size in Kbytes. A GUI for modifying these values is provided using the XPCE package. To use this, start the XPCE manual tools using `manpce/0`, after which you find Preferences in the File menu.

Considering portability, applications that need to modify the default limits are advised to do so using `set_prolog_stack/2`.

The heap

With the heap, we refer to the memory area used by malloc() and friends. SWI-Prolog uses the area to store atoms, functors, predicates and their clauses, records and other dynamic data. No limits are imposed on the addresses returned by malloc() and friends.

2.19.2 Other Limits

Clauses The only limit on clauses is their arity (the number of arguments to the head), which is limited to 1024. Raising this limit is easy and relatively cheap, removing it is harder.

Atoms and Strings SWI-Prolog has no limits on the sizes of atoms and strings. read/1 and its derivatives however normally limit the number of newlines in an atom or string to 6 to improve error detection and recovery. This can be switched off with `style_check/1`.

The number of atoms is limited to 16777216 (16M) on 32-bit machines. On 64-bit machines this is virtually unlimited. See also section 9.4.2.

Memory areas On 32-bit hardware, SWI-Prolog data is packed in a 32-bit word, which contains both type and value information. The size of the various memory areas is limited to 128 Mb for each of the areas, except for the program heap, which is not limited. On 64-bit hardware there are no meaningful limits.

Nesting of terms Most built-in predicates that process Prolog terms create an explicitly managed stack and perform optimization for processing the last argument of a term. This implies they can process deeply nested terms at constant and low usage of the C-stack and the system raises a resource error if no more stack can be allocate. Currently only read/1 and write/1 (and all variations thereof) still use the C-stack and may cause the system to crash in an uncontrolled way (i.e., not mapped to a Prolog exception that can be caught).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Default</th>
<th>Area name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>−L</td>
<td>128M</td>
<td>local stack</td>
<td>The local stack is used to store the execution environments of procedure invocations. The space for an environment is reclaimed when it fails, exits without leaving choice points, the alternatives are cut off with the !/0 predicate or no choice points have been created since the invocation and the last subclause is started (last call optimisation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−G</td>
<td>128M</td>
<td>global stack</td>
<td>The global stack is used to store terms created during Prolog’s execution. Terms on this stack will be reclaimed by backtracking to a point before the term was created or by garbage collection (provided the term is no longer referenced).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−T</td>
<td>128M</td>
<td>trail stack</td>
<td>The trail stack is used to store assignments during execution. Entries on this stack remain alive until backtracking before the point of creation or the garbage collector determines they are no longer needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>−A</td>
<td>1M</td>
<td>argument stack</td>
<td>The argument stack is used to store one of the Virtual Machine’s registers. The amount of space needed on this stack is determined entirely by the depth in which terms are nested in the clauses that constitute the program. Overflow is unlikely.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Memory areas
2.20. SWI-PROLOG AND 64-BIT MACHINES

**Integers** On most systems SWI-Prolog is compiled with support for unbounded integers by means of the GNU GMP library. In practice this means that integers are bound by the global stack size. Too large integers cause a `resource_error`. On systems that lack GMP, integers are 64-bit on 32- as well as 64-bit machines.

Integers up to the value of the `max_tagged_integer` Prolog flag are represented more efficiently on the stack. For integers that appear in clauses, the value (below `max_tagged_integer` or not) has little impact on the size of the clause.

**Floating point numbers** Floating point numbers are represented as C-native double precision floats, 64-bit IEEE on most machines.

2.19.3 Reserved Names

The boot compiler (see `-b` option) does not support the module system. As large parts of the system are written in Prolog itself we need some way to avoid name clashes with the user’s predicates, database keys, etc. Like Edinburgh C-Prolog [Pereira, 1986] all predicates, database keys, etc., that should be hidden from the user start with a dollar (`$`) sign.

2.20 SWI-Prolog and 64-bit machines

Most of today’s 64-bit platforms are capable of running both 32-bit and 64-bit applications. This asks for some clarifications on the advantages and drawbacks of 64-bit addressing for (SWI-)Prolog.

2.20.1 Supported platforms

SWI-Prolog can be compiled for a 32- or 64-bit address space on any system with a suitable C-compiler. Pointer arithmetic is based on the type `(u)intptr_t` from `stdint.h`, with suitable emulation on MS-Windows.

2.20.2 Comparing 32- and 64-bits Prolog

Most of Prolog’s memory usage consists of pointers. This indicates the primary drawback: Prolog memory usage almost doubles when using the 64-bit addressing model. Using more memory means copying more data between CPU and main memory, slowing down the system.

What then are the advantages? First of all, SWI-Prolog’s addressing of the Prolog stacks does not cover the whole address space due to the use of `type tag bits` and `garbage collection flags`. On 32-bit hardware the stacks are limited to 128MB each. This tends to be too low for demanding applications on modern hardware. On 64-bit hardware the limit is $2^{32}$ times higher, exceeding the addressing capabilities of today’s CPUs and operating systems. This implies Prolog can be started with stack sizes that use the full capabilities of your hardware.

Multi-threaded applications profit much more because every thread has its own set of stacks. The Prolog stacks start small and are dynamically expanded (see section 2.19.1). The C-stack is also dynamically expanded, but the maximum size is reserved when a thread is started. Using 100 threads at the maximum default C-stack of 8Mb (Linux) costs 800Mb virtual memory!\(^\text{18}\)

\(^\text{18}\)C-recursion over Prolog data structures is removed from most of SWI-Prolog. When removed from all predicates it will often be possible to use lower limits in threads. See [http://www.swi-prolog.org/Devel/CStack.html](http://www.swi-prolog.org/Devel/CStack.html)
The implications of theoretical performance loss due to increased memory bandwidth implied by exchanging wider pointers depend on the design of the hardware. We only have data for the popular IA32 vs. AMD64 architectures. Here, it appears that the loss is compensated for by an instruction set that has been optimized for modern programming. In particular, the AMD64 has more registers and the relative addressing capabilities have been improved. Where we see a 10% performance degradation when placing the SWI-Prolog kernel in a Unix shared object, we cannot find a measurable difference on AMD64.

### 2.20.3 Choosing between 32- and 64-bits Prolog

For those cases where we can choose between 32- and 64-bits, either because the hardware and OS support both or because we can still choose the hardware and OS, we give guidelines for this decision.

First of all, if SWI-Prolog needs to be linked against 32- or 64-bit native libraries, there is no choice as it is not possible to link 32- and 64-bit code into a single executable. Only if all required libraries are available in both sizes and there is no clear reason to use either do the different characteristics of Prolog become important.

Prolog applications that require more than the 128MB stack limit provided in 32-bit addressing mode must use the 64-bit edition. Note however that the limits must be doubled to accommodate the same Prolog application.

If the system is tight on physical memory, 32-bit Prolog has the clear advantage of using only slightly more than half of the memory of 64-bit Prolog. This argument applies as long as the application fits in the virtual address space of the machine. The virtual address space of 32-bit hardware is 4GB, but in many cases the operating system provides less to user applications.

The only standard SWI-Prolog library adding significantly to this calculation is the RDF database provided by the semweb package. It uses approximately 80 bytes per triple on 32-bit hardware and 150 bytes on 64-bit hardware. Details depend on how many different resources and literals appear in the dataset as well as desired additional literal indexes.

Summarizing, if applications are small enough to fit comfortably in virtual and physical memory, simply take the model used by most of the applications on the OS. If applications require more than 128MB per stack, use the 64-bit edition. If applications approach the size of physical memory, fit in the 128MB stack limit and fit in virtual memory, the 32-bit version has clear advantages. For demanding applications on 64-bit hardware with more than about 6GB physical memory the 64-bit model is the model of choice.
Initialising and Managing a Prolog Project

Prolog text-books give you an overview of the Prolog language. The manual tells you what predicates are provided in the system and what they do. This chapter explains how to run a project. There is no ultimate ‘right’ way to do this. Over the years we developed some practice in this area and SWI-Prolog’s commands are there to support this practice. This chapter describes the conventions and supporting commands.

The first two sections (section 3.1 and section 3.2) only require plain Prolog. The remainder discusses the use of the built-in graphical tools that require the XPCE graphical library installed on your system.

3.1 The project source files

Organisation of source files depends largely on the size of your project. If you are doing exercises for a Prolog course you’ll normally use one file for each exercise. If you have a small project you’ll work with one directory holding a couple of files and some files to link it all together. Even bigger projects will be organised in sub-projects, each using its own directory.

3.1.1 File Names and Locations

File Name Extensions

The first consideration is what extension to use for the source files. Tradition calls for .pl, but conflicts with Perl force the use of another extension on systems where extensions have global meaning, such as MS-Windows. On such systems .pro is the common alternative. On MS-Windows, the alternative extension is stored in the registry key HKEY_CURRENT_USER/Software/SWI/Prolog/fileExtension or HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE/Software/SWI/Prolog/fileExtension. All versions of SWI-Prolog load files with the extension .pl as well as with the registered alternative extension without explicitly specifying the extension. For portability reasons we propose the following convention:

If there is no conflict because you do not use a conflicting application or the system does not force a unique relation between extension and application, use .pl.

With a conflict choose .pro and use this extension for the files you want to load through your file manager. Use .pl for all other files for maximal portability.

Project Directories

Large projects are generally composed of sub-projects, each using its own directory or directory structure. If nobody else will ever touch your files and you use only one computer, there is little to worry
about, but this is rarely the case with a large project.

To improve portability, SWI-Prolog uses the POSIX notation for filenames, which uses the forward slash (/) to separate directories. Just before reaching the file system, SWI-Prolog uses `prolog_to_os_filename/2` to convert the filename to the conventions used by the hosting operating system. It is strongly advised to write paths using the /, especially on systems using the \ for this purpose (MS-Windows). Using \ violates the portability rules and requires you to double the \ due to the Prolog quoted-atom escape rules.

Portable code should use `prolog_to_os_filename/2` to convert computed paths into system paths when constructing commands for `shell/1` and friends.

**Sub-projects using search paths**

Thanks to Quintus, Prolog adapted an extensible mechanism for searching files using `file_search_path/2`. This mechanism allows for comfortable and readable specifications.

Suppose you have extensive library packages on graph algorithms, set operations and GUI primitives. These sub-projects are likely candidates for re-use in future projects. A good choice is to create a directory with sub-directories for each of these sub-projects.

Next, there are three options. One is to add the sub-projects to the directory hierarchy of the current project. Another is to use a completely dislocated directory. Third, the sub-project can be added to the SWI-Prolog hierarchy. Using local installation, a typical `file_search_path/2` is:

```prolog
:- prolog_load_context(directory, Dir),
   asserta(user:file_search_path(myapp, Dir)).

user:file_search_path(graph, myapp(graph)).
user:file_search_path(ui, myapp(ui)).
```

When using sub-projects in the SWI-Prolog hierarchy, one should use the path alias `swi` as basis. For a system-wide installation, use an absolute path.

Extensive sub-projects with a small well-defined API should define a load file with calls to `use_module/1` to import the various library components and export the API.

### 3.1.2 Project Special Files

There are a number of tasks you typically carry out on your project, such as loading it, creating a saved state, debugging it, etc. Good practice on large projects is to define small files that hold the commands to execute such a task, name this file after the task and give it a file extension that makes starting easy (see section 3.1.1). The task `load` is generally central to these tasks. Here is a tentative list:

- **load.pl**
  - Use this file to set up the environment (Prolog flags and file search paths) and load the sources. Quite commonly this file also provides convenient predicates to parse command-line options and start the application.

- **run.pl**
  - Use this file to start the application. Normally it loads `load.pl` in silent-mode, and calls one of the starting predicates from `load.pl`. 
3.2. USING MODULES

- **save.pl**
  Use this file to create a saved state of the application by loading load.pl and calling qsave_program/2 to generate a saved state with the proper options.

- **debug.pl**
  Loads the program for debugging. In addition to loading load.pl this file defines rules for portray/1 to modify printing rules for complex terms and customisation rules for the debugger and editing environment. It may start some of these tools.

3.1.3 International source files

As discussed in section 2.18, SWI-Prolog supports international character handling. Its internal encoding is UNICODE. I/O streams convert to/from this internal format. This section discusses the options for source files not in US-ASCII.

SWI-Prolog can read files in any of the encodings described in section 2.18. Two encodings are of particular interest. The text encoding deals with the current locale, the default used by this computer for representing text files. The encodings utf8, unicode_le and unicode_be are UNICODE encodings: they can represent—in the same file—characters of virtually any known language. In addition, they do so unambiguously.

If one wants to represent non US-ASCII text as Prolog terms in a source file, there are several options:

- **Use escape sequences**
  This approach describes NON-ASCII as sequences of the form \(\text{octal}\). The numerical argument is interpreted as a UNICODE character.\(^1\) The resulting Prolog file is strict 7-bit US-ASCII, but if there are many NON-ASCII characters it becomes very unreadable.

- **Use local conventions**
  Alternatively the file may be specified using local conventions, such as the EUC encoding for Japanese text. The disadvantage is portability. If the file is moved to another machine, this machine must use the same locale or the file is unreadable. There is no elegant way if files from multiple locales must be united in one application using this technique. In other words, it is fine for local projects in countries with uniform locale conventions.

- **Using UTF-8 files**
  The best way to specify source files with many NON-ASCII characters is definitely the use of UTF-8 encoding. Prolog can be notified of this encoding in two ways, using a UTF-8 BOM (see section 2.18.1) or using the directive :- encoding(utf8). Many of today’s text editors, including PceEmacs, are capable of editing UTF-8 files. Projects that were started using local conventions can be re-coded using the Unix iconv tool or often using commands offered by the editor.

3.2 Using modules

Modules have been debated fiercely in the Prolog world. Despite all counter-arguments we feel they are extremely useful because:

\(^1\)To my knowledge, the ISO escape sequence is limited to 3 octal digits, which means most characters cannot be represented.
• They hide local predicates
  This is the reason they were invented in the first place. Hiding provides two features. They allow for short predicate names without worrying about conflicts. Given the flat name-space introduced by modules, they still require meaningful module names as well as meaningful names for exported predicates.

• They document the interface
  Possibly more important than avoiding name conflicts is their role in documenting which part of the file is for public usage and which is private. When editing a module you may assume you can reorganise anything except the name and the semantics of the exported predicates without worrying.

• They help the editor
  The PceEmacs built-in editor does on-the-fly cross-referencing of the current module, colouring predicates based on their origin and usage. Using modules, the editor can quickly find out what is provided by the imported modules by reading just the first term. This allows it to indicate in real-time which predicates are not used or not defined.

Using modules is generally easy. Only if you write meta-predicates (predicates reasoning about other predicates) that are exported from a module is a good understanding required of the resolution of terms to predicates inside a module. Here is a typical example from readutil.

```prolog
:- module(read_util,
  [ read_line_to_codes/2, % +Fd, -Codes
    read_line_to_codes/3, % +Fd, -Codes, ?Tail
    read_stream_to_codes/2, % +Fd, -Codes
    read_stream_to_codes/3, % +Fd, -Codes, ?Tail
    read_file_to_codes/3, % +File, -Codes, +Options
    read_file_to_terms/3 % +File, -Terms, +Options
  ]).
```

### 3.3 The test-edit-reload cycle

SWI-Prolog does not enforce the use of a particular editor for writing Prolog source code. Editors are complicated programs that must be mastered in detail for real productive programming. If you are familiar with a specific editor you should not be forced to change. You may specify your favourite editor using the Prolog flag `editor`, the environment variable `EDITOR` or by defining rules for `prolog_edit:edit_source/1` (see section 4.5).

The use of a built-in editor, which is selected by setting the Prolog flag `editor` to `pce_emacs`, has advantages. The XPCE `editor` object, around which the built-in PceEmacs is built, can be opened as a Prolog stream allowing analysis of your source by the real Prolog system.

#### 3.3.1 Locating things to edit

The central predicate for editing something is `edit/1`, an extensible front-end that searches for objects (files, predicates, modules, as well as XPCE classes and methods) in the Prolog database. If multiple matches are found it provides a choice. Together with the built-in completion on atoms bound to the `TAB` key this provides a quick way to edit objects:
3.3.2 Editing and incremental compilation

One of the nice features of Prolog is that the code can be modified while the program is running. Using pure Prolog you can trace a program, find it is misbehaving, enter a break environment, modify the source code, reload it and finally do retry on the misbehaving predicate and try again. This sequence is not uncommon for long-running programs. For faster programs one will normally abort after understanding the misbehaviour, edit the source, reload it and try again.

One of the nice features of SWI-Prolog is the availability of make/0, a simple predicate that checks all loaded source files to see which ones you have modified. It then reloads these files, considering the module from which the file was loaded originally. This greatly simplifies the trace-edit-verify development cycle. For example, after the tracer reveals there is something wrong with prove/3, you do:

?- edit(prove).

Now edit the source, possibly switching to other files and making multiple changes. After finishing, invoke make/0, either through the editor UI (Compile/Make (Control-C Control-M)) or on the top-level, and watch the files being reloaded.²

?- make.
% show compiled into photo_gallery 0.03 sec, 3,360 bytes

3.4 Using the PceEmacs built-in editor

3.4.1 Activating PceEmacs

Initially edit/1 uses the editor specified in the EDITOR environment variable. There are two ways to force it to use the built-in editor. One is to set the Prolog flag editor to pce_emacs and the other is by starting the editor explicitly using the emacs/[0,1] predicates.

²Watching these files is a good habit. If expected files are not reloaded you may have forgotten to save them from the editor or you may have been editing the wrong file (wrong directory).
3.4.2 Bluffing through PceEmacs

PceEmacs closely mimics Richard Stallman’s GNU-Emacs commands, adding features from modern window-based editors to make it more acceptable for beginners. At the basis, PceEmacs maps keyboard sequences to methods defined on the extended editor object. Some frequently used commands are, with their key-binding, presented in the menu bar above each editor window. A complete overview of the bindings for the current mode is provided through Help/Show key bindings (Control-h Control-b).

Edit modes

Modes are the heart of (Pce)Emacs. Modes define dedicated editing support for a particular kind of (source-)text. For our purpose we want Prolog mode. There are various ways to make PceEmacs use Prolog mode for a file.

- Using the proper extension
  If the file ends in .pl or the selected alternative (e.g. .pro) extension, Prolog mode is selected.

- Using #!/path/to/pl
  If the file is a Prolog Script file, starting with the line #!/path/to/pl options -s, Prolog mode is selected regardless of the extension.

- Using ! Prolog !
  If the above sequence appears in the first line of the file (inside a Prolog comment) Prolog mode is selected.

- Explicit selection
  Finally, using File/Mode/Prolog (y)ou can switch to Prolog mode explicitly.

Frequently used editor commands

Below we list a few important commands and how to activate them.

- Cut/Copy/Paste
  These commands follow Unix/X11 traditions. You’re best suited with a three-button mouse. After selecting using the left-mouse (double-click uses word-mode and triple line-mode), the selected text is automatically copied to the clipboard (X11 primary selection on Unix). Cut is achieved using the DEL key or by typing something else at the location. Paste is achieved using the middle-mouse (or wheel) button. If you don’t have a middle-mouse button, pressing the left- and right-button at the same time is interpreted as a middle-button click. If nothing helps, there is the Edit/Paste menu entry. Text is pasted at the caret location.

- Undo
  Undo is bound to the GNU-Emacs Control- as well as the MS-Windows Control-Z sequence.

- Abort
  Multi-key sequences can be aborted at any stage using Control-G.

---

3 Decent merging with MS-Windows control-key conventions is difficult as many conflict with GNU-Emacs. Especially the cut/copy/paste commands conflict with important GNU-Emacs commands.
3.4. USING THE PCEEMACS BUILT-IN EDITOR

- **Find**
  Find (Search) is started using Control-S (forward) or Control-R (backward). PceEmacs implements *incremental search*. This is difficult to use for novices, but very powerful once you get the clue. After one of the above start keys, the system indicates search mode in the status line. As you are typing the search string, the system searches for it, extending the search with every character you type. It illustrates the current match using a green background.

  If the target cannot be found, PceEmacs warns you and no longer extends the search string. During search, some characters have special meaning. Typing anything but these characters commits the search, re-starting normal edit mode. Special commands are:

  **Control-S**
  Search forwards for next.

  **Control-R**
  Search backwards for next.

  **Control-W**
  Extend search to next word boundary.

  **Control-G**
  Cancel search, go back to where it started.

  **ESC**
  Commit search, leaving caret at found location.

  **Backspace**
  Remove a character from the search string.

- **Dynamic Abbreviation**
  Also called *dabbrev*, dynamic abbreviation is an important feature of Emacs clones to support programming. After typing the first few letters of an identifier, you may press Alt-/, causing PceEmacs to search backwards for identifiers that start the same and use it to complete the text you typed. A second Alt-/ searches further backwards. If there are no hits before the caret, it starts searching forwards. With some practice, this system allows for entering code very fast with nice and readable identifiers (or other difficult long words).

- **Open (a file)**
  Is called *File/Find file* (Control-x Control-f). By default the file is loaded into the current window. If you want to keep this window, press Alt-s or click the little icon at the bottom left to make the window *sticky*.

- **Split view**
  Sometimes you want to look at two places in the same file. To do this, use Control-x 2 to create a new window pointing to the same file. Do not worry, you can edit as well as move around in both. Control-x 1 kills all other windows running on the same file.

  These are the most commonly used commands. In section 3.4.3 we discuss specific support for dealing with Prolog source code.

---

4GNU-Emacs keeps extending the string, but why? Adding more text will not make it match.
3.4.3 Prolog Mode

In the previous section (section 3.4.2) we explained the basics of PceEmacs. Here we continue with Prolog-specific functionality. Possibly the most interesting is Syntax highlighting. Unlike most editors where this is based on simple patterns, PceEmacs syntax highlighting is achieved by Prolog itself actually reading and interpreting the source as you type it. There are three moments at which PceEmacs checks (part of) the syntax.

- **After typing a .**
  After typing a . that is not preceded by a symbol character, the system assumes you completed a clause, tries to find the start of this clause and verifies the syntax. If this process succeeds it colours the elements of the clause according to the rules given below. Colouring is done using information from the last full check on this file. If it fails, the syntax error is displayed in the status line and the clause is not coloured.

- **After the command Control-c Control-s**
  Acronym for Check Syntax, it performs the same checks as above for the clause surrounding the caret. On a syntax error, however, the caret is moved to the expected location of the error.\(^5\)

- **After pausing for two seconds**
  After a short pause (2 seconds), PceEmacs opens the edit buffer and reads it as a whole, creating an index of defined, called, dynamic, imported and exported predicates. After completing this, it re-reads the file and colours all clauses and calls with valid syntax.

- **After typing Control-l Control-l**
  The Control-l command re-centers the window (scrolls the window to make the caret the center of the window). Typing this command twice starts the same process as above.

The colour schema itself is defined in emacs/prolog_colour. The colouring can be extended and modified using multifile predicates. Please check this source file for details. In general, underlined objects have a popup (right-mouse button) associated with common commands such as viewing the documentation or source. Bold text is used to indicate the definition of objects (typically predicates when using plain Prolog). Other colours follow intuitive conventions. See table 3.4.3.

**Layout support** Layout is not ‘just nice’, it is essential for writing readable code. There is much debate on the proper layout of Prolog. PceEmacs, being a rather small project, supports only one particular style for layout.\(^6\) Below are examples of typical constructs.

```prolog
head(arg1, arg2).
head(arg1, arg2) :- !.
head(Arg1, arg2) :- !,
    call1(Arg1).
head(Arg1, arg2) :-
    ( if(Arg1)
```

---

\(^5\)In most cases the location where the parser cannot proceed is further down the file than the actual error location.

\(^6\)Defined in Prolog in the file emacs/prolog_mode, you may wish to extend this. Please contribute your extensions!
PceEmacs uses the same conventions as GNU-Emacs. The **TAB** key indents the current line according to the syntax rules. **Alt-q** indents all lines of the current clause. It provides support for head, calls (indented 1 tab), if-then-else, disjunction and argument lists broken across multiple lines as illustrated above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head of an exported predicate</th>
<th>Head of a predicate that is not called</th>
<th>Head of remaining predicates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Call to built-in or imported predicate</th>
<th>Call to undefined predicate</th>
<th>Call to dynamic predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Quoted atom or string</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 3.1: Colour conventions

```prolog
-> then
; else
).

head(Arg1) :-
  ( a
  ; b
  ).

head :-
a(many,
  long,
  arguments(with,
    many,
    more),
  and([ a,
    long,
    list,
    with,
    a,
    | tail
  ])).
```
Finding your way around

The command Alt- extracts name and arity from the caret location and jumps (after conformation or edit) to the definition of the predicate. It does so based on the source-location database of loaded predicates also used by edit/1. This makes locating predicates reliable if all sources are loaded and up-to-date (see make/0).

In addition, references to files in use_module/[1,2], consult/1, etc. are red if the file cannot be found and underlined blue if the file can be loaded. A popup allows for opening the referenced file.

3.5 The Graphical Debugger

SWI-Prolog offers two debuggers. One is the traditional text console-based 4-port Prolog tracer and the other is a window-based source level debugger. The window-based debugger requires XPCE installed. It operates based on the prolog_trace_interception/4 hook and other low-level functionality described in chapter B.

Window-based tracing provides a much better overview due to the eminent relation to your source code, a clear list of named variables and their bindings as well as a graphical overview of the call and choice-point stack. There are some drawbacks though. Using a textual trace on the console, one can scroll back and examine the past, while the graphical debugger just presents a (much better) overview of the current state.

3.5.1 Invoking the window-based debugger

Whether the text-based or window-based debugger is used is controlled using the predicates guitracer/0 and noguitracer/0. Entering debug mode is controlled using the normal predicates for this: trace/0 and spy/1. In addition, PceEmacs prolog mode provides the command Prolog/Break at (Control-c b) to insert a break-point at a specific location in the source code.

The graphical tracer is particulary useful for debugging threads. The tracer must be loaded from the main thread before it can be used from a background thread.

guitracer
This predicate installs the above-mentioned hooks that redirect tracing to the window-based environment. No window appears. The debugger window appears as actual tracing is started through trace/0, by hitting a spy-point defined by spy/1 or a break-point defined using the PceEmacs command Prolog/Break at (Control-c b).

noguitracer
Disable the hooks installed by guitracer/0, reverting to normal text console-based tracing.

gtrace
Utility defined as guitracer,trace.

gdebug
Utility defined as guitracer,debug.

gspy(+Predicate)
Utility defined as guitracer,spy(Predicate).
3.6 The Prolog Navigator

Another tool is the Prolog Navigator. This tool can be started from PceEmacs using the command Browse/Prolog navigator, from the GUI debugger or using the programmatic IDE interface described in section 3.8.

3.7 Cross-referencer

A cross-referencer is a tool that examines the caller-callee relation between predicates, and, using this information to explicate dependency relations between source files, finds calls to non-existing predicates and predicates for which no callers can be found. Cross-referencing is useful during program development, reorganisation, clean-up, porting and other program maintenance tasks. The dynamic nature of Prolog makes the task non-trivial. Goals can be created dynamically using call/1 after construction of a goal term. Abstract interpretation can find some of these calls, but they can also come from external communication, making it impossible to predict the callee. In other words, the cross-referencer has only partial understanding of the program, and its results are necessarily incomplete. Still, it provides valuable information to the developer.

SWI-Prolog’s cross-referencer is split into two parts. The standard Prolog library prolog_xref is an extensible library for information gathering described in section A.22, and the XPCE library pce_xref provides a graphical front-end for the cross-referencer described here. We demonstrate the tool on CHAT80, a natural language question and answer system by Fernando C.N. Pereira and David H.D. Warren.

gxref

Run cross-referencer on all currently loaded files and present a graphical overview of the result. As the predicate operates on the currently loaded application it must be run after loading the application.

The left window (see figure 3.1) provides browsers for loaded files and predicates. To avoid long file paths, the file hierarchy has three main branches. The first is the current directory holding the sources. The second is marked alias, and below it are the file-search-path aliases (see file_search_path/2 and absolute_file_name/3). Here you find files loaded from the system as well as modules of the program loaded from other locations using the file search path. All loaded files that fall outside these categories are below the last branch called /. Files where the system found suspicious dependencies are marked with an exclamation mark. This also holds for directories holding such files. Clicking on a file opens a File info window in the right pane.

The File info window shows a file, its main properties, its undefined and not-called predicates and its import and export relations to other files in the project. Both predicates and files can be opened by clicking on them. The number of callers in a file for a certain predicate is indicated with a blue underlined number. A left-click will open a list and allow editing the calling predicate.

The Dependencies (see figure 3.2) window displays a graphical overview of dependencies between files. Using the background menu a complete graph of the project can be created. It is also possible to drag files onto the graph window and use the menu on the nodes to incrementally expand the graph. The underlined blue text indicates the number of predicates used in the destination file. Left-clicking opens a menu to open the definition or select one of the callers.
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Figure 3.1: File info for chattop.pl, part of CHAT80

Figure 3.2: Dependencies between source files of CHAT80
Module and non-module files The cross-referencer threads module and non-module project files differently. Module files have explicit import and export relations and the tool shows the usage and consistency of the relations. Using the Header menu command, the tool creates a consistent import list for the module that can be included in the file. The tool computes the dependency relations between the non-module files. If the user wishes to convert the project into a module-based one, the Header command generates an appropriate module header and import list. Note that the cross-referencer may have missed dependencies and does not deal with meta-predicates defined in one module and called in another. Such problems must be resolved manually.

Settings The following settings can be controlled from the settings menu:

Warn autolode
By default disabled. If enabled, modules that require predicates to be autoloaded are flagged with a warning and the file info window of a module shows the required autolod predicates.

Warn not called
If enabled (default), the file overview shows an alert icon for files that have predicates that are not called.

3.8 Accessing the IDE from your program

Over the years a collection of IDE components have been developed, each with its own interface. In addition, some of these components require each other, and loading IDE components must be on demand to avoid the IDE being part of a saved state (see qsave_program/2). For this reason, access to the IDE is concentrated on a single interface called prolog_ide/1:

prolog_ide(+Action)
This predicate ensures the IDE-enabling XPCE component is loaded, creates the XPCE class prolog_ide and sends Action to its one and only instance @prolog_ide. Action is one of the following:

open_navigator(+Directory)
Open the Prolog Navigator (see section 3.6) in the given Directory.

open_debug_status
Open a window to edit spy- and trace-points.

open_query_window
Open a little window to run Prolog queries from a GUI component.

thread_monitor
Open a graphical window indicating existing threads and their status.

debug_monitor
Open a graphical front-end for the debug library that provides an overview of the topics and catches messages.

xref
Open a graphical front-end for the cross-referencer that provides an overview of predicates and their callers.
3.9 Summary of the IDE

The SWI-Prolog development environment consists of a number of interrelated but not (yet) integrated tools. Here is a list of the most important features and tips.

- **Atom completion**
  The console\(^7\) completes a partial atom on the TAB key and shows alternatives on the command Alt-?.

- **Use edit/1 for finding locations**
  The command edit/1 takes the name of a file, module, predicate or other entity registered through extensions and starts the user’s preferred editor at the right location.

- **Select editor**
  External editors are selected using the EDITOR environment variable, by setting the Prolog flag editor, or by defining the hook prolog_edit:edit_source/1.

- **Update Prolog after editing**
  Using make/0, all files you have edited are re-loaded.

- **PceEmacs**
  Offers syntax highlighting and checking based on real-time parsing of the editor’s buffer, layout support and navigation support.

- **Using the graphical debugger**
  The predicates guitracer/0 and noguitracer/0 switch between traditional text-based and window-based debugging. The tracer is activated using the trace/0, spy/1 or menu items from PceEmacs or the Prolog Navigator.

- **The Prolog Navigator**
  Shows the file structure and structure inside the file. It allows for loading files, editing, setting spy-points, etc.

---

\(^{7}\)On Windows this is realised by swipl-win.exe, on Unix through the GNU readline library, which is included automatically when found by configure.
4.1 Notation of Predicate Descriptions

We have tried to keep the predicate descriptions clear and concise. First the predicate name is printed in bold face, followed by the arguments in italics. Arguments are preceded by a mode indicator. There is no complete agreement on mode indicators in the Prolog community. We use the following definitions:\(^1\)

- Argument must be fully instantiated to a term that satisfies the required argument type. Think of the argument as input.
- Argument must be unbound. Think of the argument as output.
- Argument must be bound to a partial term of the indicated type. Note that a variable is a partial term for any type. Think of the argument as either input or output or both input and output. E.g., in `stream_property(S, reposition(Bool))`, the reposition part of the term is input and the uninstantiated `Bool` is output.
: Argument is a meta-argument. Implies +. See chapter 5 for more information on module handling.
@ Argument is not further instantiated. Typically used for type tests.
! Argument contains a mutable structure that may be modified using `setarg/3` or `nb_setarg/3`.

Referring to a predicate in running text is done using a predicate indicator. The canonical and most generic form of a predicate indicator is a term `<module>:<name>/(arity)`. If the module is irrelevant (built-in predicate) or can be inferred from the context it is often omitted. Compliant to the ISO standard draft on DCG (see section 4.12), SWI-Prolog also allows for `<module>/<name>/(arity)` to refer to a grammar rule. For all non-negative arity, `<name>/+arity` is the same as `<name>/(arity)+2`, regardless of whether or not the referenced predicate is defined or can be used as a grammar rule. The `-`-notation can be used in all places that traditionally allow for a predicate indicator, e.g., the module declaration, `spy/1`, and `dynamic/1`.

4.2 Character representation

In traditional (Edinburgh-) Prolog, characters are represented using character codes. Character codes are integer indices into a specific character set. Traditionally the character set was 7-bits US-ASCII.

\(^1\)These definitions are taken from PlDoc. The current manual has only one mode declaration per predicate and therefore predicates with mode (+,-) and (-,+) are described as (?,?). The @-mode is often replaced by +.
8-bit character sets have been allowed for a long time, providing support for national character sets, of which iso-latin-1 (ISO 8859-1) is applicable to many Western languages.

ISO Prolog introduces three types, two of which are used for characters and one for accessing binary streams (see open/4). These types are:

- **code**
  A **character code** is an integer representing a single character. As files may use multi-byte encoding for supporting different character sets (utf-8 encoding for example), reading a code from a text file is in general not the same as reading a byte.

- **char**
  Alternatively, characters may be represented as **one-character atoms**. This is a natural representation, hiding encoding problems from the programmer as well as providing much easier debugging.

- **byte**
  Bytes are used for accessing binary streams.

In SWI-Prolog, character codes are **always** the Unicode equivalent of the encoding. That is, if get_code/1 reads from a stream encoded as KOI8-R (used for the Cyrillic alphabet), it returns the corresponding Unicode code-points. Similarly, assembling or disassembling atoms using atom_codes/2 interprets the codes as Unicode points. See section 2.18.1 for details.

To ease the pain of the two character representations (code and char), SWI-Prolog’s built-in predicates dealing with character data work as flexible as possible: they accept data in any of these formats as long as the interpretation is unambiguous. In addition, for output arguments that are instantiated, the character is extracted before unification. This implies that the following two calls are identical, both testing whether the next input character is an a.

```prolog
peek_code(Stream, a).
peek_code(Stream, 97).
```

The two character representations are handled by a large number of built-in predicates, all of which are ISO-compatible. For converting between code and character there is char_code/2. For breaking atoms and numbers into characters there are atom_chars/2, atom_codes/2, number_chars/2 and number_codes/2. For character I/O on streams there are get_char/[1,2], get_code/[1,2], get_byte/[1,2], peek_char/[1,2], peek_code/[1,2], peek_byte/[1,2], put_code/[1,2], put_char/[1,2] and put_byte/[1,2]. The **Prolog flag double_quotes** controls how text between double-quotes is interpreted.

## 4.3 Loading Prolog source files

This section deals with loading Prolog source files. A Prolog source file is a plain text file containing a Prolog program or part thereof. Prolog source files come in three flavours:

**A traditional** Prolog source file contains Prolog clauses and directives, but no **module declaration** (see module/1). They are normally loaded using consult/1 or ensure_loaded/1.
Currently, a non-module file can only be loaded into a single module.\(^2\)

**A module** Prolog source file starts with a module declaration. The subsequent Prolog code is loaded into the specified module, and only the exported predicates are made available to the context loading the module. Module files are normally loaded with `use_module/[1,2]`. See chapter 5 for details.

**An include** Prolog source file is loaded using the `include/1` directive, textually including Prolog text into another Prolog source. A file may be included into multiple source files and is typically used to share declarations such as multifile or dynamic between source files.

Prolog source files are located using `absolute_file_name/3` with the following options:

```
locate_prolog_file(Spec, Path) :-
    absolute_file_name(Spec, [
        file_type(prolog),
        access(read)
    ], Path).
```

The `file_type(prolog)` option is used to determine the extension of the file using `prolog_file_type/2`. The default extension is `.pl`. `Spec` allows for the path-alias construct defined by `absolute_file_name/3`. The most commonly used path-alias is `library(LibraryFile)`. The example below loads the library file `ordsets.pl` (containing predicates for manipulating ordered sets).

```
:- use_module(library(ordsets)).
```

SWI-Prolog recognises grammar rules (DCG) as defined in [Clocksin & Melish, 1987]. The user may define additional compilation of the source file by defining the dynamic predicates `term_expansion/2` and `goal_expansion/2`. Transformations by `term_expansion/2` overrule the system’s grammar rule transformations. It is not allowed to use `assert/1`, `retract/1` or any other database predicate in `term_expansion/2` other than for local computational purposes.\(^3\) Code that needs to create additional clauses must use `compile_aux_clauses/1`. See `library(apply_macros)` for an example.

**A directive** is an instruction to the compiler. Directives are used to set (predicate) properties (see section 4.14), set flags (see `set_prolog_flag/2`) and load files (this section). Directives are terms of the form `:- ⟨term⟩.`. Here are some examples:

```
:- use_module(library(lists)).
:- dynamic
    store/2. % Name, Value
```

\(^2\)This limitation may be lifted in the future. Existing limitations in SWI-Prolog’s source code administration make this non-trivial.

\(^3\)It does work for normal loading, but not for `qcompile/1`. 
### Table 4.1: Properties of the file-loading predicates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>if</th>
<th>must_be_module</th>
<th>import</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consult/1</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>false</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ensure_loaded/1</td>
<td>not_loaded</td>
<td>false</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use_module/1</td>
<td>not_loaded</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use_module/2</td>
<td>not_loaded</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reexport/1</td>
<td>not_loaded</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reexport/2</td>
<td>not_loaded</td>
<td>true</td>
<td>specified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The import column specifies what is imported if the loaded file is a module file.

The directive `initialization/1` can be used to run arbitrary Prolog goals. The specified goal is started after loading the file in which it appears has completed.

SWI-Prolog compiles code as it is read from the file and directives are executed as goals. This implies that directives may call any predicate that has been defined before the point where the directive appears. It also accepts `?- (term)`, as a synonym.

SWI-Prolog does not have a separate `reconsult/1` predicate. Reconsulting is implied automatically by the fact that a file is consulted which is already loaded.

Advanced topics are handled in subsequent sections: mutually dependent files (section 4.3.2), multi-threaded loading (section 4.3.2) and reloading running code (section 4.3.2).

The core of the family of loading predicates is `load_files/2`. The predicates `consult/1, ensure_loaded/1, use_module/1, use_module/2` and `reexport/1` pass the file argument directly to `load_files/2` and pass additional options as expressed in the table 4.1:

#### load_files(:Files, +Options)

The predicate `load_files/2` is the parent of all the other loading predicates except for `include/1`. It currently supports a subset of the options of Quintus `load_files/2`. Files is either a single source file, or a list of source files. The specification for a source file is handed to `absolute_file_name/2`. See this predicate for the supported expansions. Options is a list of options using the format `OptionName(OptionValue)`.

The following options are currently supported:

- **autoload(Bool)**
  - If true (default false), indicate that this load is a demand load. This implies that, depending on the setting of the Prolog flag `verbose_autoload`, the load action is printed at level informational or silent. See also `print_message/2` and `current_prolog_flag/2`.

- **derived_from(File)**
  - Indicate that the loaded file is derived from File. Used by `make/0` to time-check and load the original file rather than the derived file.

- **dialect(+Dialect)**
  - Loads Files with enhanced compatibility with the target Prolog system identified by Dialect. See `expects_dialect/1` and section C for details.

- **encoding(Encoding)**
  - Specify the way characters are encoded in the file. Default is taken from the Prolog flag `encoding`. See section 2.18.1 for details.
4.3. LOADING PROLOG SOURCE FILES

expand(Boolean)
   If true, run the filenames through expand_file_name/2 and load the returned files. Default is false, except for consult/1 which is intended for interactive use. Flexible location of files is defined by file_search_path/2.

format(+Format)
   Used to specify the file format if data is loaded from a stream using the stream(Stream) option. Default is source, loading Prolog source text. If qlf, load QLF data (see qcompile/1).

if(Condition)
   Load the file only if the specified condition is satisfied. The value true loads the file unconditionally, changed loads the file if it was not loaded before or has been modified since it was loaded the last time, and not_loaded loads the file if it was not loaded before.

imports(Import)
   Specify what to import from the loaded module. The default for use_module/1 is all. Import is passed from the second argument of use_module/2. Traditionally it is a list of predicate indicators to import. As part of the SWI-Prolog/YAP integration, we also support Pred as Name to import a predicate under another name. Finally, Import can be the term except(Exceptions), where Exceptions is a list of predicate indicators that specify predicates that are not imported or Pred as Name terms to denote renamed predicates. See also reexport/2 and use_module/2.\textsuperscript{4}

   If Import equals all, all operators are imported as well. Otherwise, operators are not imported. Operators can be imported selectively by adding terms op(Pri,Assoc,Name) to the Import list. If such a term is encountered, all exported operators that unify with this term are imported. Typically, this construct will be used with all arguments unbound to import all operators or with only Name bound to import a particular operator.

modified(TimeStamp)
   Claim that the source was loaded at TimeStamp without checking the source. This option is intended to be used together with the stream(Input) option, for example after extracting the time from an HTTP server or database.

must_be_module(Boolean)
   If true, raise an error if the file is not a module file. Used by use_module/[1,2].

qcompile(Atom)
   How to deal with quick-load-file compilation by qcompile/1. Values are:

   never
      Default. Do not use qcompile, unless called explicitly

   auto
      Use qcompile for all writeable files. See comment below.

   large
      Use qcompile if the file is ‘large’. Currently, files larger than 100 Kbytes are considered large.

\textsuperscript{4}BUG: Name/Arity as NewName is currently implemented using a link clause. This harms efficiency and does not allow for querying the relation through predicate_property/2.
part
If this load_file/2 appears in a directive of a file that is compiled into Quick Load Format using qcompile/1, the contents of the argument files are included in the .qlf file instead of the loading directive.

If this option is not present, it uses the value of the Prolog flag qcompile as default.

redefine_module(+Action)
Defines what to do if a file is loaded that provides a module that is already loaded from another file. Action is one of false (default), which prints an error and refuses to load the file, or true, which uses unload_file/1 on the old file and then proceeds loading the new file. Finally, there is ask, which starts interaction with the user. ask is only provided if user_input is associated with a terminal.

reexport(Bool)
If true re-export the imported predicate. Used by reexport/1 and reexport/2.

register(Bool)
If false, do not register the load location and options. This option is used by make/0 and load_hotfixes/1 to avoid polluting the load-context database. See source_file_property/2.

silent(Bool)
If true, load the file without printing a message. The specified value is the default for all files loaded as a result of loading the specified files. This option writes the Prolog flag verbose_load with the negation of Bool.

stream(Input)
This SWI-Prolog extension compiles the data from the stream Input. If this option is used, Files must be a single atom which is used to identify the source location of the loaded clauses as well as to remove all clauses if the data is re-consulted. This option is added to allow compiling from non-file locations such as databases, the web, the user (see consult/1) or other servers. It can be combined with format(qlf) to load QLF data from a stream.

The load_files/2 predicate can be hooked to load other data or data from objects other than files. See prolog_load_file/2 for a description and http_load for an example.

consult(:File)
Read File as a Prolog source file. Calls to consult/1 may be abbreviated by just typing a number of filenames in a list. Examples:

?- consult(load). % consult load or load.pl
?- [library(lists)]. % load library lists
?- [user]. % Type program on the terminal

The predicate consult/1 is equivalent to load_files(File, []), except for handling the special file user, which reads clauses from the terminal. See also the stream(Input) option of load_files/2.

ensure_loaded(:File)
If the file is not already loaded, this is equivalent to consult/1. Otherwise, if the file defines
4.3. LOADING PROLOG SOURCE FILES

a module, import all public predicates. Finally, if the file is already loaded, is not a module file, and the context module is not the global user module, ensure_loaded/1 will call consult/1.

With this semantics, we hope to get as close as possible to the clear semantics without the presence of a module system. Applications using modules should consider using use_module/[1,2].

Equivalent to load_files(Files, [if(not_loaded)]). 5

include(+File)

Textually include the content of File in the file in which the directive :- include(File). appears. The include construct is only honoured if it appears as a directive in a source file. Textual include (similar to C/C++ #include) is obviously useful for sharing declarations such as dynamic/1 or multifile/1 by including a file with directives from multiple files that use these predicates.

Textual including files that contain clauses is less obvious. Normally, in SWI-Prolog, clauses are owned by the file in which they are defined. This information is used to replace the old definition after the file has been modified and is reloaded by, e.g., make/0. As we understand it, include/1 is intended to include the same file multiple times. Including a file holding clauses multiple times into the same module is rather meaningless as it just duplicates the same clauses. Including a file holding clauses in multiple modules does not suffer from this problem, but leads to multiple equivalent copies of predicates. Using use_module/1 can achieve the same result, while sharing the predicates.

Despite these observations, various projects seem to be using include/1 to load files holding clauses, typically loading them only once. Such usage would allow replacement by, e.g., consult/1. Unfortunately, the same project might use include/1 to share directives. Another example of a limitation of mapping to consult/1 is that if the clauses of a predicate are distributed over two included files, discontiguous/1 is appropriate, while if they are distributed over two consulted files, one must use multifile/1.

To accommodate included files holding clauses, SWI-Prolog distinguishes between the source location of a clause (in this case the included file) and the owner of a clause (the file that includes the file holding the clause). The source location is used by, e.g., edit/1, the graphical tracer, etc., while the owner is used to determine which clauses are removed if the file is modified. Relevant information is found with the following predicates:

- source_file/2 describes the owner relation.
- predicate_property/2 describes the source location (of the first clause).
- clause_property/2 provides access to both source and ownership.
- source_file_property/2 can be used to query include relationships between files.

require(+ListOfNameAndArity)

Declare that this file/module requires the specified predicates to be defined “with their commonly accepted definition”. This predicate originates from the Prolog portability layer for

5On older versions the condition used to be if(changed). Poor time management on some machines or copying often caused problems. The make/0 predicate deals with updating the running system after changing the source code.
XPCE. It is intended to provide a portable mechanism for specifying that this module requires
the specified predicates.

The implementation normally first verifies whether the predicate is already defined. If not, it
will search the libraries and load the required library.

SWI-Prolog, having autoloading, does not load the library. Instead it creates a procedure header
for the predicate if it does not exist. This will flag the predicate as ‘undefined’. See also
check/0 and autoload/0.

encoding(+Encoding)
This directive can appear anywhere in a source file to define how characters are encoded in the
remainder of the file. It can be used in files that are encoded with a superset of US-ASCII,
currently UTF-8 and ISO Latin-1. See also section 2.18.1.

make
Consult all source files that have been changed since they were consulted. It checks all loaded
source files: files loaded into a compiled state using pl -c ... and files loaded using
consult/1 or one of its derivatives. The predicate make/0 is called after edit/1,
automatically reloading all modified files. If the user uses an external editor (in a separate
window), make/0 is normally used to update the program after editing. In addition, make/0
updates the autoload indices (see section 2.13) and runs list_undefined/0 from the
check library to report on undefined predicates.

library_directory(?Atom)
Dynamic predicate used to specify library directories. Default ./lib, ~/lib/prolog and
the system’s library (in this order) are defined. The user may add library directories using
assertz/1, asserta/1 or remove system defaults using retract/1. Deprecated. New
code should use file_search_path/2.

file_search_path(+Alias, ?Path)
Dynamic predicate used to specify ‘path-aliases’. This feature is best described using an exam-
ple. Given the definition:

```
file_search_path(demo, '/usr/lib/prolog/demo').
```

the file specification demo(myfile) will be expanded to /usr/lib/prolog/demo/
myfile. The second argument of file_search_path/2 may be another alias.

Below is the initial definition of the file search path. This path implies swi(⟨Path⟩) and refers
to a file in the SWI-Prolog home directory. The alias foreign(⟨Path⟩) is intended for storing
shared libraries (.so or .DLL files). See also load_foreign_library/[1,2].

```
user:file_search_path(library, X) :-
    library_directory(X).
user:file_search_path(swi, Home) :-
    current_prolog_flag(home, Home).
user:file_search_path(foreign, swi(ArchLib)) :-
    current_prolog_flag(arch, Arch),
    atom_concat('lib/', Arch, ArchLib).
```
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The \texttt{file_search_path/2} expansion is used by all loading predicates as well as by \texttt{absolute_file_name/2,3}.

The Prolog flag \texttt{verbose_file_search} can be set to \texttt{true} to help debugging Prolog’s search for files.

\texttt{expand_file_search_path(+Spec, -Path)}

Unifies \texttt{Path} with all possible expansions of the filename specification \texttt{Spec}. See also \texttt{absolute_file_name/2,3}.

\texttt{prolog_file_type(?Extension, ?Type)}

This dynamic multifile predicate defined in module \texttt{user} determines the extensions considered by \texttt{file_search_path/2}. \texttt{Extension} is the filename extension without the leading dot, \texttt{Type} denotes the type as used by the \texttt{file_type(Type)} option of \texttt{file_search_path/2}. Here is the initial definition of \texttt{prolog_file_type/2}:

\begin{verbatim}
user:prolog_file_type(pl, prolog).
user:prolog_file_type(Ext, prolog) :-
    current_prolog_flag(associate, Ext),
    Ext \== pl.
user:prolog_file_type(qlf, qlf).
user:prolog_file_type(Ext, executable) :-
    current_prolog_flag(shared_object_extension, Ext).
\end{verbatim}

Users can add extensions for Prolog source files to avoid conflicts (for example with \texttt{perl}) as well as to be compatible with another Prolog implementation. We suggest using \texttt{.pro} for avoiding conflicts with \texttt{perl}. Overriding the system definitions can stop the system from finding libraries.

\texttt{source_file(?File)}

True if \texttt{File} is a loaded Prolog source file. \texttt{File} is the absolute and canonical path to the source file.

\texttt{source_file(?Pred, ?File)}

Is true if the predicate specified by \texttt{Pred} was loaded from file \texttt{File}, where \texttt{File} is an absolute path name (see \texttt{absolute_file_name/2}). Can be used with any instantiation pattern, but the database only maintains the source file for each predicate. See also \texttt{clause_property/2}. Note that the relation between files and predicates is more complicated if \texttt{include/1} is used. The predicate describes the \textit{owner} of the predicate. See \texttt{include/1} for details.
source_file_property(?File, ?Property)

Is true when Property is a property of the loaded file File. If File is non-var, it can be a file specification that is valid for load_files/2. Defined properties are:

derived_from(Original, OriginalModified)

File was generated from the file Original, which was last modified at OriginalModified at the time it was loaded. This property is available if File was loaded using the derived_from(Original) option to load_files/2.

includes(IncludedFile, IncludedFileModified)

File used include/1 to include IncludedFile. The last modified time of IncludedFile was IncludedFileModified at the time it was included.

included_in(MasterFile, Line)

File was included into MasterFile from line Line. This is the inverse of the includes property.

load_context(Module, Location, Options)

Module is the module into which the file was loaded. If File is a module, this is the module into which the exports are imported. Otherwise it is the module into which the clauses of the non-module file are loaded. Location describes the file location from which the file was loaded. It is either a term ⟨file⟩⟨line⟩ or the atom user if the file was loaded from the terminal or another unknown source. Options are the options passed to load_files/2. Note that all predicates to load files are mapped to load_files/2, using the option argument to specify the exact behaviour.

modified(Stamp)

File-modification time when File was loaded. This is used by make/0 to find files whose modification time is different from when it was loaded.

module(Module)

File is a module file that declares the modules Module.

unload_file(+File)

Remove all clauses loaded from File. If File loaded a module, clear the module’s export list and disassociate it from the file. File is a canonical filename or a file indicator that is valid for load_files/2.

This predicate should be used with care. The multi-threaded nature of SWI-Prolog makes removing static code unsafe. Attempts to do this should be reserved to development or situations where the application can guarantee that none of the clauses associated to File are active.

prolog_load_context(?Key, ?Value)

Obtain context information during compilation. This predicate can be used from directives appearing in a source file to get information about the file being loaded. See also source_location/2 and if/1. The following keys are defined:
### 4.3. LOADING PROLOG SOURCE FILES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>module</td>
<td>Module into which file is loaded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source</td>
<td>File being loaded. If the system is processing an included file, the value is the main file. Returns the original Prolog file when loading a .qlf file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>file</td>
<td>Similar to source, but returns the file being included when called while an include file is being processed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stream</td>
<td>Stream identifier (see current_input/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directory</td>
<td>Directory in which source lives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dialect</td>
<td>Compatibility mode. See expects_dialect/1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>term_position</td>
<td>Position of last term read. Term of the form ‘$stream_position’(0, ⟨Line⟩, 0, 0, 0). See also stream_position_data/3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>script</td>
<td>Boolean that indicates whether the file is loaded as a script file (see -s).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The directory is commonly used to add rules to file_search_path/2, setting up a search path for finding files with absolute_file_name/3. E.g.:

```prolog
:- dynamic user:file_search_path/2.
:- multifile user:file_search_path/2.

:- prolog_load_context(directory, Dir),
   asserta(user:file_search_path(my_program_home, Dir)).
   ...
   absolute_file_name(my_program_home(’README.TXT’), ReadMe, 
       [ access(read) ]),
   ...
```

**source_location(-File, -Line)**

If the last term has been read from a physical file (i.e., not from the file user or a string), unify File with an absolute path to the file and Line with the line number in the file. New code should use prolog_load_context/2.

**at_halt(:Goal)**

Register Goal to be run from PL_cleanup(), which is called when the system halts. The hooks are run in the reverse order they were registered (FIFO). Success or failure executing a hook is ignored. If the hook raises an exception this is printed using print_message/2. An attempt to call halt/[0,1] from a hook is ignored.

**:- initialization(:Goal)**

[ISO]

Call Goal after loading the source file in which this directive appears has been completed. In addition, Goal is executed if a saved state created using qsave_program/1 is restored.

The ISO standard only allows for using :- Term if Term is a directive. This means that arbitrary goals can only be called from a directive by means of the initialization/1 directive. SWI-Prolog does not enforce this rule.
The `initialization/1` directive must be used to do program initialization in saved states (see `qsave/program/1`). A saved state contains the predicates, Prolog flags and operators present at the moment the state was created. Other resources (records, foreign resources, etc.) must be recreated using `initialization/1` directives or from the entry goal of the saved state.

Up to SWI-Prolog 5.7.11, `Goal` was executed immediately rather than after loading the program text in which the directive appears as dictated by the ISO standard. In many cases the exact moment of execution is irrelevant, but there are exceptions. For example, `load_foreign_library/1` must be executed immediately to make the loaded foreign predicates available for exporting. SWI-Prolog now provides the directive `use_foreign_library/1` to ensure immediate loading as well as loading after restoring a saved state. If the system encounters a directive `:- initialization(load_foreign_library(...))`, it will load the foreign library immediately and issue a warning to update your code. This behaviour can be extended by providing clauses for the multifile hook predicate `prolog:initialize_now(Term, Advice)`, where `Advice` is an atom that gives advice how to resolve the compatibility issue.

```
initialization(:Goal, +When)
```

Similar to `initialization/1`, but allows for specifying when `Goal` is executed while loading the program text:

- **now**
  - Execute `Goal` immediately.

- **after_load**
  - Execute `Goal` after loading program text. This is the same as `initialization/1`.

- **restore**
  - Do not execute `Goal` while loading the program, but **only** when restoring a state.

**compiling**

True if the system is compiling source files with the `-c` option or `qcompile/1` into an intermediate code file. Can be used to perform conditional code optimisations in `term_expansion/2` (see also the `-O` option) or to omit execution of directives during compilation.

### 4.3.1 Conditional compilation and program transformation

ISO Prolog defines no way for program transformations such as macro expansion or conditional compilation. Expansion through `term_expansion/2` and `expand_term/2` can be seen as part of the de-facto standard. This mechanism can do arbitrary translation between valid Prolog terms read from the source file to Prolog terms handed to the compiler. As `term_expansion/2` can return a list, the transformation does not need to be term-to-term.

Various Prolog dialects provide the analogous `goal_expansion/2` and `expand_goal/2` that allow for translation of individual body terms, freeing the user of the task to disassemble each clause.

```
term_expansion(+Term1, -Term2)
```

Dynamic and multifile predicate, normally not defined. When defined by the user all terms read during consulting are given to this predicate. If the predicate succeeds Prolog will assert
Term2 in the database rather than the read term (Term1). Term2 may be a term of the form ?- Goal. or :- Goal. Goal is then treated as a directive. If Term2 is a list, all terms of the list are stored in the database or called (for directives). If Term2 is of the form below, the system will assert Clause and record the indicated source location with it.

'${source_location} (⟨File⟩, ⟨Line⟩): ⟨Clause⟩

When compiling a module (see chapter 5 and the directive module/2), expand_term/2 will first try term_expansion/2 in the module being compiled to allow for term expansion rules that are local to a module. If there is no local definition, or the local definition fails to translate the term, expand_term/2 will try term_expansion/2 in module user. For compatibility with SICStus and Quintus Prolog, this feature should not be used. See also expand_term/2, goal_expansion/2 and expand_goal/2.

decl {3.3} expand_term(+Term1, -Term2)

This predicate is normally called by the compiler on terms read from the input to perform preprocessing. It consists of three steps, where each step processes the output of the previous step.

1. Test conditional compilation directives and translate all input to [ ] if we are in a ‘false branch’ of the conditional compilation. See section 4.3.1.

2. Call term_expansion/2. This predicate is first tried in the module that is being compiled and then in the module user.

3. Call DCG expansion (dgc_translate_rule/2)

4. Call expand_goal/2 on each body term that appears in the output of the previous steps.

decl {3.3} goal_expansion(+Goal1, -Goal2)

Like term_expansion/2, goal_expansion/2 provides for macro expansion of Prolog source code. Between expand_term/2 and the actual compilation, the body of clauses analysed and the goals are handed to expand_goal/2, which uses the goal_expansion/2 hook to do user-defined expansion.

The predicate goal_expansion/2 is first called in the module that is being compiled, and then on the user module. If Goal is of the form Module:Goal where Module is instantiated, goal_expansion/2 is called on Goal using rules from module Module followed by user.

Only goals appearing in the body of clauses when reading a source file are expanded using this mechanism, and only if they appear literally in the clause, or as an argument to a defined meta-predicate that is annotated using ‘0’ (see meta_predicate/1). Other cases need a real predicate definition.

decl {3.3} expand_goal(+Goal1, -Goal2)

This predicate is normally called by the compiler to perform preprocessing using goal_expansion/2. The predicate computes a fixed-point by applying transformations until there are no more changes. If optimisation is enabled (see -O and optimise), expand_goal/2 simplifies the result by removing unneeded calls to true/0 and fail/0 as well as unreachable branches.


**compile_aux_clauses(+Clauses)**

Compile clauses on behalf of `goal.expansion/2`. This predicate compiles the argument clauses into static predicates, associating the predicates with the current file but avoids changing the notion of current predicate and therefore discontiguous warnings.

**dcg_translate_rule(+In, -Out)**

This predicate performs the translation of a term `Head-->Body` into a normal Prolog clause. Normally this functionality should be accessed using `expand_term/2`.

**preprocessor(-Old, +New)**

Read the input file via an external process that acts as preprocessor. A preprocessor is specified as an atom. The first occurrence of the string `%f` is replaced by the name of the file to be loaded. The standard output of the resulting command is loaded. To use the Unix C preprocessor one should define:

```prolog
?- preprocessor(Old, '/lib/cpp -C -P %f'), consult(...).
Old = none
```

Using `cpp` for Prolog preprocessing is not ideal as the tokenization rules for comment and quoted strings differ between C and Prolog. Another problem is availability and compatibility with regard to option processing of `cpp`.

**Conditional compilation**

Conditional compilation builds on the same principle as `term.expansion/2, goal.expansion/2` and the expansion of grammar rules to compile sections of the source code conditionally. One of the reasons for introducing conditional compilation is to simplify writing portable code. See section C for more information. Here is a simple example:

```prolog
:- if(+source_exports(library(lists), suffix/2)).

suffix(Suffix, List) :-
    append(_, Suffix, List).
:- endif.
```

Note that these directives can only appear as separate terms in the input. Typical usage scenarios include:

- Load different libraries on different dialects
- Define a predicate if it is missing as a system predicate
- Realise totally different implementations for a particular part of the code due to different capabilities.
- Realise different configuration options for your software.
4.3. LOADING PROLOG SOURCE FILES

:- if(:Goal)
    Compile subsequent code only if Goal succeeds. For enhanced portability, Goal is processed
    by expand_goal/2 before execution. If an error occurs, the error is printed and processing
    proceeds as if Goal has failed.

:- elif(:Goal)
    Equivalent to :- else. :-if(Goal). ... :- endif. In a sequence as below, the
    section below the first matching elif is processed. If no test succeeds the else branch is
    processed.

    :- if(test1).
        section_1.
    :- elif(test2).
        section_2.
    :- elif(test3).
        section_3.
    :- else.
        section_else.
    :- endif.

:- else
    Start ‘else’ branch.

:- endif
    End of conditional compilation.

4.3.2 Loading files, active code and threads

Traditionally, Prolog environments allow for reloading files holding currently active code. In particular,
the following sequence is a valid use of the development environment:

- Trace a goal
- Find unexpected behaviour of a predicate
- Enter a break using the b command
- Fix the sources and reload them using make/0
- Exit the break, retry using the r command

Goals running during the reload keep running on the old definition, while new goals use the
reloaded definition, which is why the retry must be used after the reload. This implies that clauses
of predicates that are active during the reload cannot be reclaimed. Normally a small amount of
dead clauses should not be an issue during development. Such clauses can be reclaimed with
garbage_collect_clauses/0.

garbage_collect_clauses
    Clean up all dirty predicates, where dirty predicates are defined to be predicates that have both
    old and new definitions due to reloading a source file while the predicate was active. Of course,
predicates that are active using garbage_collect_clauses/0 cannot be reclaimed
and remain dirty. Predicates are, like atoms, shared resources and therefore all threads are
suspended during the execution of this predicate.
Compilation of mutually dependent code

Large programs are generally split into multiple files. If file $A$ accesses predicates from file $B$ which accesses predicates from file $A$, we consider this a mutual or circular dependency. If traditional load predicates (e.g., `consult/1`) are used to include file $B$ from $A$ and $A$ from $B$, loading either file results in a loop. This is because `consult/1` is mapped to `load_files/2` using the option `if(true)(...)`. Such programs are typically loaded using a `load file` that consults all required (non-module) files. If modules are used, the dependencies are made explicit using `use_module/1` statements. The `use_module/1` predicate, however, maps to `load_files/2` with the option `if(not_loaded)(...)`. A `use_module/1` on an already loaded file merely makes the public predicates of the used module available.

Summarizing, mutual dependency of source files is fully supported with no precautions when using modules. Modules can use each other in an arbitrary dependency graph. When using `consult/1`, predicate dependencies between loaded files can still be arbitrary, but the consult relations between files must be a proper tree.

Compilation with multiple threads

This section discusses compiling files for the first time. For re-loading see section 4.3.2.

In older versions, compilation was thread-safe due to a global lock in `load_files/2` and the code dealing with autoloading (see section 2.13). Besides unnecessary stalling when multiple threads trap unrelated undefined predicates, this easily leads to deadlocks, notably if threads are started from an initialization/1 directive.6

Starting with version 5.11.27, the autoloader is no longer locked and multiple threads can compile files concurrently. This requires special precautions only if multiple threads wish to load the same file at the same time. Therefore, `load_files/2` checks automatically whether some other thread is already loading the file. If not, it starts loading the file. If another thread is already loading the file, the thread blocks until the other thread finishes loading the file. After waiting, and if the file is a module file, it will make the public predicates available.

Note that this schema does not prevent deadlocks under all situations. Consider two mutually dependent (see section 4.3.2) module files $A$ and $B$, where thread 1 starts loading $A$ and thread 2 starts loading $B$ at the same time. Both threads will deadlock when trying to load the used module.

The current implementation does not detect such cases and the involved threads will freeze. This problem can be avoided if a mutually dependent collection of files is always loaded from the same start file.

Reloading running code

This section discusses not re-loading of code. Initial loading of code is discussed in section 4.3.2.

As of version 5.5.30, there is basic thread-safety for reloading source files while other threads are executing code defined in these source files. Reloading a file freezes all threads after marking the active predicates originating from the file being reloaded. The threads are resumed after the file has been loaded. In addition, after completing loading the outermost file, the system runs `garbage_collect_clauses/0`.

---

6Although such goals are started after loading the file in which they appear, the calling thread is still likely to hold the 'load' lock because it is compiling the file from which the file holding the directive is loaded.
What does that mean? Unfortunately it does not mean we can ‘hot-swap’ modules. Consider the case where thread A is executing the recursive predicate P. We ‘fix’ P and reload. The already running goals for P continue to run the old definition, but new recursive calls will use the new definition! Many similar cases can be constructed with dependent predicates.

It provides some basic security for reloading files in multi-threaded applications during development. In the above scenario the system does not crash uncontrolled, but behaves like any broken program: it may return the wrong bindings, wrong truth value or raise an exception.

Future versions may have an ‘update now’ facility. Such a facility can be implemented on top of the logical update view. It would allow threads to do a controlled update between processing independent jobs.

### 4.3.3 Quick load files

SWI-Prolog supports compilation of individual or multiple Prolog source files into ‘Quick Load Files’. A ‘Quick Load File’ (.qlf file) stores the contents of the file in a precompiled format.

These files load considerably faster than source files and are normally more compact. They are machine-independent and may thus be loaded on any implementation of SWI-Prolog. Note, however, that clauses are stored as virtual machine instructions. Changes to the compiler will generally make old compiled files unusable.

Quick Load Files are created using qcompile/1. They are loaded using consult/1 or one of the other file-loading predicates described in section 4.3. If consult/1 is given an explicit .pl file, it will load the Prolog source. When given a .qlf file, it will load the file. When no extension is specified, it will load the .qlf file when present and the .pl file otherwise.

#### qcompile(File)

- Takes a file specification as consult/1, etc., and, in addition to the normal compilation, creates a Quick Load File from File. The file-extension of this file is .qlf. The base name of the Quick Load File is the same as the input file.
- If the file contains ‘:- consult(+File)’, ‘:- [+File]’ or :- load_files(+File, [qcompile(part), ...]) statements, the referred files are compiled into the same .qlf file. Other directives will be stored in the .qlf file and executed in the same fashion as when loading the .pl file.
- For term expansion/2, the same rules as described in section 2.10 apply.
- Conditional execution or optimisation may test the predicate compiling/0.
- Source references (source_file/2) in the Quick Load File refer to the Prolog source file from which the compiled code originates.

#### qcompile(File, +Options)

- As qcompile/1, but processes additional options as defined by load_files/2.

### 4.4 Editor Interface

SWI-Prolog offers an extensible interface which allows the user to edit objects of the program: predicates, modules, files, etc. The editor interface is implemented by edit/1 and consists of three parts: locating, selecting and starting the editor. Any of these parts may be customized. See section 4.4.1.

7BUG: Option processing is currently incomplete.
The built-in edit specifications for \texttt{edit/1} (see \texttt{prolog\_edit:locate/3}) are described in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fully specified objects</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\langle Module \rangle:\langle Name \rangle/\langle Arity \rangle module(\langle Module \rangle)</td>
<td>Refers a predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>file(\langle Path \rangle)</td>
<td>Refers to a file</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>source_file(\langle Path \rangle)</td>
<td>Refers to a loaded source file</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ambiguous specifications</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\langle Name \rangle/\langle Arity \rangle</td>
<td>Refers to this predicate in any module</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\langle Name \rangle</td>
<td>Refers to (1) the named predicate in any module with any arity, (2) a (source) file, or (3) a module.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\texttt{edit(+Specification)}

First exploits \texttt{prolog\_edit:locate/3} to translate \texttt{Specification} into a list of \texttt{Locations}. If there is more than one ‘hit’, the user is asked to select from the locations found. Finally, \texttt{prolog\_edit:edit\_source/1} is used to invoke the user’s preferred editor. Typically, \texttt{edit/1} can be handed the name of a predicate, module, basename of a file, XPCE class, XPCE method, etc.

\texttt{edit}

Edit the ‘default’ file using \texttt{edit/1}. The default file is the file loaded with the command line option \texttt{-s} or, in Windows, the file loaded by double-clicking from the Windows shell.

\subsection*{4.4.1 Customizing the editor interface}

The predicates described in this section are \textit{hooks} that can be defined to disambiguate specifications given to \texttt{edit/1}, find the related source, and open an editor at the given source location.

\texttt{prolog\_edit:locate(+Spec, -FullSpec, -Location)}

Where \texttt{Spec} is the specification provided through \texttt{edit/1}. This multifile predicate is used to enumerate locations where an object satisfying the given \texttt{Spec} can be found. \texttt{FullSpec} is unified with the complete specification for the object. This distinction is used to allow for ambiguous specifications. For example, if \texttt{Spec} is an atom, which appears as the base-name of a loaded file and as the name of a predicate, \texttt{FullSpec} will be bound to \texttt{file(Path)} or \texttt{Name/Arity}.

\textit{Location} is a list of attributes of the location. Normally, this list will contain the term \texttt{file(File)} and, if available, the term \texttt{line(Line)}.

\texttt{prolog\_edit:locate(+Spec, -Location)}

Same as \texttt{prolog\_edit:locate/3}, but only deals with fully specified objects.

\texttt{prolog\_edit:edit\_source(+Location)}

Start editor on \textit{Location}. See \texttt{prolog\_edit:locate/3} for the format of a location term. This multifile predicate is normally not defined. If it succeeds, \texttt{edit/1} assumes the editor is started.

If it fails, \texttt{edit/1} uses its internal defaults, which are defined by the Prolog flag \texttt{editor} and/or the environment variable \texttt{EDITOR}. The following rules apply. If the Prolog flag \texttt{editor} is of the format \$\langle name \rangle, the editor is determined by the environment variable \langle name \rangle. Else, if this flag is \texttt{pce\_emacs} or \texttt{built\_in} and XPCE is loaded or can be loaded, the built-in
Emacs clone is used. Else, if the environment EDITOR is set, this editor is used. Finally, vi is used as default on Unix systems and notepad on Windows.

See the default user preferences file dotfiles/dotplrc for examples.

**prolog_edit:edit_command**(+Editor, -Command)
Determine how Editor is to be invoked using shell/1. Editor is the determined editor (see **edit_source/1**), without the full path specification, and without a possible (.exe) extension. Command is an atom describing the command. The following %-sequences are replaced in Command before the result is handed to **shell/1**:

| %e | Replaced by the (OS) command name of the editor |
| %f | Replaced by the (OS) full path name of the file |
| %d | Replaced by the line number |

If the editor can deal with starting at a specified line, two clauses should be provided. The first pattern invokes the editor with a line number, while the second is used if the line number is unknown.

The default contains definitions for vi, emacs, emacsclient, vim, notepad* and wordpad*. Starred editors do not provide starting at a given line number.

Please contribute your specifications to bugs@swi-prolog.org.

**prolog_edit:load**
Normally an undefined multifile predicate. This predicate may be defined to provide loading hooks for user extensions to the edit module. For example, XPCE provides the code below to load swi_edit, containing definitions to locate classes and methods as well as to bind this package to the PceEmacs built-in editor.

```prolog
:- multifile prolog_edit:load/0.

prolog_edit:load :-
    ensure_loaded(library(swi_edit)).
```

### 4.5 List the program, predicates or clauses

**listing**(+Pred)
List predicates specified by Pred. Pred may be a predicate name (atom), which lists all predicates with this name, regardless of their arity. It can also be a predicate indicator (<name>/<arity> or <name>/(arity)), possibly qualified with a module. For example:

```prolog
?- listing(lists:member/2).
```

A listing is produced by enumerating the clauses of the predicate using **clause/2** and printing each clause using **portray_clause/1**. This implies that the variable names are generated (A, B, ...) and the layout is defined by rules in **portray_clause/1**.

**listing**
List all predicates from the calling module using **listing/1**. For example, `?- listing.`
lists clauses in the default user module and \(-\) \texttt{lists:listing}. lists the clauses in the module \texttt{lists}.

\texttt{portray\_clause(+Clause)}

Pretty print a clause. A clause should be specified as a term \('⟨\text{Head}⟩ :\text{-} ⟨\text{Body}⟩')'. Facts are represented as \('⟨\text{Head}⟩ :\text{-} \text{true}'' or simply \(⟨\text{Head}⟩\). Variables in the clause are written as \(A, B, \ldots\). Singleton variables are written as \(\_\). See also \texttt{portray\_clause/2}.

\texttt{portray\_clause(+Stream, +Clause)}

Pretty print a clause to \texttt{Stream}. See \texttt{portray\_clause/1} for details.

### 4.6 Verify Type of a Term

Type tests are semi-deterministic predicates that succeed if the argument satisfies the requested type. Type-test predicates have no error condition and do not instantiate their argument. See also library \texttt{error}.

\texttt{var(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) currently is a free variable.

\texttt{nonvar(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) currently is not a free variable.

\texttt{integer(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is bound to an integer.

\texttt{float(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is bound to a floating point number.

\texttt{rational(@Term)} 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is bound to a rational number. Rational numbers include integers.

\texttt{rational(@Term, -Numerator, -Denominator)} 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is a rational number with given \texttt{Numerator} and \texttt{Denominator}. The \texttt{Numerator} and \texttt{Denominator} are in canonical form, which means \texttt{Denominator} is a positive integer and there are no common divisors between \texttt{Numerator} and \texttt{Denominator}.

\texttt{number(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is bound to an integer or floating point number.\(^8\)

\texttt{atom(@Term)} [ISO] 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is bound to an atom.

\texttt{blob(@Term, ?Type)} 
True if \(\text{Term}\) is a \texttt{blob} of type \texttt{Type}. See section 9.4.7.

---

\(^8\)As rational numbers are not atomic in the current implementation and we do not want to break the rule that \texttt{number/1} implies \texttt{atomic/1}, \texttt{number/1} fails on rational numbers. This will change if rational numbers become atomic.
4.7 Comparison and Unification of Terms

**string(@Term)**
True if `Term` is bound to a string. Note that string here refers to the built-in atomic type string as described in section 4.23. Text in double quotes such as "hello" creates a list of character codes. We illustrate the issues in the example queries below.

```prolog
?- write("hello").
true.

?- string("hello").
false.

?- is_list("hello").
true.
```

**atomic(@Term)**
True if `Term` is bound to an atom, string, integer or floating point number. Note that string refers to the built-in type. See `string/1`. Strings in the classical Prolog sense are lists and therefore compound.

**compound(@Term)**
True if `Term` is bound to a compound term. See also `functor/3` and `=/2`.

**callable(@Term)**
True if `Term` is bound to an atom or a compound term, so it can be handed without type-error to `call/1`, `functor/3` and `=/2`.

**ground(@Term)**
True if `Term` holds no free variables.

**cyclic_term(@Term)**
True if `Term` contains cycles, i.e. is an infinite term. See also `acyclic_term/1` and section 2.16.9

**acyclic_term(@Term)**
True if `Term` does not contain cycles, i.e. can be processed recursively in finite time. See also `cyclic_term/1` and section 2.16.

### 4.7 Comparison and Unification of Terms

Although unification is mostly done implicitly while matching the head of a predicate, it is also provided by the predicate `=~/2`.

```prolog
?Term1 = ?Term2
```
Unify `Term1` with `Term2`. True if the unification succeeds. For behaviour on cyclic terms see the Prolog flag `occurs_check`. It acts as if defined by the following fact:

---

9The predicates `cyclic_term/1` and `acyclic_term/1` are compatible with SICStus Prolog. Some Prolog systems supporting cyclic terms use `is_cyclic/1`.  

---
CHAPTER 4. BUILT-IN PREDICATES

=(Term, Term).

@Term1 \= @Term2  [ISO]
   Equivalent to \(+Term1 = Term2. See also dif/2.

4.7.1 Standard Order of Terms

Comparison and unification of arbitrary terms. Terms are ordered in the so-called “standard order”. This order is defined as follows:

1. Variables < Numbers < Atoms < Strings < Compound Terms

2. Variables are sorted by address. Attaching attributes (see section 6.1) does not affect the ordering.

3. Atoms are compared alphabetically.

4. Strings are compared alphabetically.

5. Numbers are compared by value. Mixed integer/float are compared as floats. If the comparison is equal, the float is considered the smaller value. If the Prolog flag iso is defined, all floating point numbers precede all integers.

6. Compound terms are first checked on their arity, then on their functor name (alphabetically) and finally recursively on their arguments, leftmost argument first.

@Term1 == @Term2  [ISO]
   True if Term1 is equivalent to Term2. A variable is only identical to a sharing variable.

@Term1 \== @Term2  [ISO]
   Equivalent to \(+Term1 == Term2.

@Term1 @< @Term2  [ISO]
   True if Term1 is before Term2 in the standard order of terms.

@Term1 @<= @Term2  [ISO]
   True if both terms are equal (==/2) or Term1 is before Term2 in the standard order of terms.

@Term1 @> @Term2  [ISO]
   True if Term1 is after Term2 in the standard order of terms.

@Term1 @>= @Term2  [ISO]
   True if both terms are equal (==/2) or Term1 is after Term2 in the standard order of terms.

compare(?Order, @Term1, @Term2)  [ISO]
   Determine or test the Order between two terms in the standard order of terms. Order is one of <, > or =, with the obvious meaning.

Strings might be considered atoms in future versions. See also section 4.23
4.7. COMPARISON AND UNIFICATION OF TERMS

4.7.2 Special unification and comparison predicates

This section describes special purpose variations on Prolog unification. The predicate `unify_with_occurs_check/2` provides sound unification and is part of the ISO standard. The predicate `subsumes_term/2` defines ‘one-sided unification’ and is part of the ISO proposal established in Edinburgh (2010). Finally, `unifiable/3` is a “what-if” version of unification that is often used as a building block in constraint reasoners.

`unify_with_occurs_check(+Term1, +Term2)`

As `=/2`, but using sound unification. That is, a variable only unifies to a term if this term does not contain the variable itself. To illustrate this, consider the two queries below.

1. `?- A = f(A).`
   `A = f(A).`
2. `?- unify_with_occurs_check(A, f(A)).`
   `false.`

The first statement creates a cyclic term, also called a rational tree. The second executes logically sound unification and thus fails. Note that the behaviour of unification through `=/2` as well as implicit unification in the head can be changed using the Prolog flag `occurs_check`.

The SWI-Prolog implementation of `unify_with_occurs_check/2` is cycle-safe and only guards against creating cycles, not against cycles that may already be present in one of the arguments. This is illustrated in the following two queries:

1. `?- X = f(X), Y = X, unify_with_occurs_check(X, Y).`
   `X = Y, Y = f(Y).`
2. `?- X = f(X), Y = f(Y), unify_with_occurs_check(X, Y).`
   `X = Y, Y = f(Y).`

Some other Prolog systems interpret `unify_with_occurs_check/2` as if defined by the clause below, causing failure on the above two queries. Direct use of `acyclic_term/1` is portable and more appropriate for such applications.

`unify_with_occurs_check(X,X) :- acyclic_term(X).`

`+Term1 `=@=` +Term2`

True if `Term1` is a variant of (or structurally equivalent to) `Term2`. Testing for a variant is weaker than equivalence (`==/2`), but stronger than unification (`=/2`). Two terms `A` and `B` are variants iff there exists a renaming of the variables in `A` that makes `A` equivalent (`==`) to `B` and vice versa.\(^\text{11}\) Examples:

---

\(^\text{11}\)Row 7 and 8 of this table may come as a surprise, but row 8 is satisfied by (left-to-right) \(A \rightarrow C, B \rightarrow A\) and (right-to-left) \(C \rightarrow A, A \rightarrow B\). If the same variable appears in different locations in the left and right term, the variant relation can be broken by consistent binding of both terms. E.g., after binding the first argument in row 8 to a value, both terms are no longer variant.
A term is always a variant of a copy of itself. Term copying takes place in, e.g., copy_term/2, findall/3 or proving a clause added with asserta/1. In the pure Prolog world (i.e., without attributed variables), =@=/2 behaves as if defined below. With attributed variables, variant of the attributes is tested rather than trying to satisfy the constraints.

A =@= B :-
    copy_term(A, Ac),
    copy_term(B, Bc),
    numbervars(Ac, 0, N),
    numbervars(Bc, 0, N),
    Ac == Bc.

The SWI-Prolog implementation is cycle-safe and can deal with variables that are shared between the left and right argument. Its performance is comparable to ==/2, both on success and (early) failure.  

This predicate is known by the name variant/2 in some other Prolog systems. Be aware of possible differences in semantics if the arguments contain attributed variables or share variables.

+Term1 \=@= +Term2
Equivalent to ‘\+Term1 =@= Term2’. See =@=/2 for details.

subsumes_term(@Generic, @Specific)
[ISO]
True if Generic can be made equivalent to Specific by only binding variables in Generic. The current implementation performs the unification and ensures that the variable set of Specific is not changed by the unification. On success, the bindings are undone. This predicate respects constraints.

term_subsumer(+Special1, +Special2, -General)
General is the most specific term that is a generalisation of Special1 and Special2. The implementation can handle cyclic terms.

unifiable(@X, @Y, -Unifier)
If X and Y can unify, unify Unifier with a list of Var = Value, representing the bindings required
to make $X$ and $Y$ equivalent.\footnote{This predicate was introduced for the implementation of \texttt{dif/2} and \texttt{when/2} after discussion with Tom Schrijvers and Bart Demoen. None of us is really happy with the name and therefore suggestions for a new name are welcome.} This predicate can handle cyclic terms. Attributed variables are handled as normal variables. Associated hooks are not executed.

\begin{verbatim}
?=(@Term1, @Term2)
Succeeds if the syntactic equality of Term1 and Term2 can be decided safely, i.e. if the result of Term1 == Term2 will not change due to further instantiation of either term. It behaves as if defined by ?=(X,Y) :- \+ unifiable(X,Y,[_,_]).
\end{verbatim}

4.8 Control Predicates

The predicates of this section implement control structures. Normally the constructs in this section, except for \texttt{repeat/0}, are translated by the compiler. Please note that complex goals passed as arguments to meta-predicates such as \texttt{findall/3} below cause the goal to be compiled to a temporary location before execution. It is faster to define a sub-predicate (i.e. \texttt{one_character_atoms/1} in the example below) and make a call to this simple predicate.

\begin{verbatim}
one_character_atoms(As) :-
    findall(A, (current_atom(A), atom_length(A, 1)), As).
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{fail} \[ISO\]
Always fail. The predicate \texttt{fail/0} is translated into a single virtual machine instruction.

\texttt{false} \[ISO\]
Same as fail, but the name has a more declarative connotation.

\texttt{true} \[ISO\]
Always succeed. The predicate \texttt{true/0} is translated into a single virtual machine instruction.

\texttt{repeat} \[ISO\]
Always succeed, provide an infinite number of choice points.

\texttt{!} \[ISO\]
Cut. Discard choice points of parent frame and of frames created after the parent frame. As of SWI-Prolog 3.3, the semantics of the cut are compliant with the ISO standard. This implies that the cut is transparent to \texttt;/2}, \texttt{->/2} and \texttt{*->/2}. Cuts appearing in the \textit{condition} part of \texttt{->/2} and \texttt{*->/2} as well as in \texttt{\+/1} are local to the condition.\footnote{Up to version 4.0.6, the sequence $X$=!$X$ acted as a true cut. This feature has been deleted for ISO compliance.}

\begin{verbatim}
t1 :- (a, !, fail ; b). % cuts a/0 and t1/0
t2 :- (a -> b, ! ; c). % cuts b/0 and t2/0
t3 :- call((a, !, fail ; b)). % cuts a/0
t4 :- \+(a, !, fail ; b). % cuts a/0
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{:Goal1 , :Goal2} \[ISO\]
Conjunction. True if both ‘Goal1’ and ‘Goal2’ can be proved. It is defined as follows (this definition does not lead to a loop as the second comma is handled by the compiler):
Goal1, Goal2 :- Goal1, Goal2.

Goal1 ; _Goal2 :- Goal1.
_Goal1 ; Goal2 :- Goal2.

Goal1 | Goal2

Equivalent to ;/2. Retained for compatibility only. New code should use ;/2.

:Condition -> :Action

If-then and If-Then-Else. The ->/2 construct commits to the choices made at its left-hand side, destroying choice-points created inside the clause (by ;/2), or by goals called by this clause. Unlike !/0, the choice-point of the predicate as a whole (due to multiple clauses) is not destroyed. The combination ;/2 and ->/2 acts as if defined as:

If -> Then; _Else := If, !, Then.
If -> _Then; Else := !, Else.
If -> Then := If, !, Then.

Please note that (If -> Then) acts as (If -> Then ; fail), making the construct fail if the condition fails. This unusual semantics is part of the ISO and all de-facto Prolog standards.

:Condition *-> :Action ; :Else

This construct implements the so-called ‘soft-cut’. The control is defined as follows: If Condition succeeds at least once, the semantics is the same as (Condition, Action). If Condition does not succeed, the semantics is that of (\+ Condition, Else). In other words, if Condition succeeds at least once, simply behave as the conjunction of Condition and Action, otherwise execute Else.

The construct A *-> B, i.e. without an Else branch, is translated as the normal conjunction A, B.\[17\]

\+ :Goal

True if ‘Goal’ cannot be proven (mnemonic: + refers to provable and the backslash (\) is normally used to indicate negation in Prolog).

4.9 Meta-Call Predicates

Meta-call predicates are used to call terms constructed at run time. The basic meta-call mechanism offered by SWI-Prolog is to use variables as a subclause (which should of course be bound to a valid goal at runtime). A meta-call is slower than a normal call as it involves actually searching the database at runtime for the predicate, while for normal calls this search is done at compile time.

\[17\] BUG: The decompiler implemented by clause/2 returns this construct as a normal conjunction too.
**4.9. META-CALL PREDICATES**

**call(:Goal)**
Invoke *Goal* as a goal. Note that clauses may have variables as subclauses, which is identical to call/1.

**call(:Goal, +ExtraArg1, ...)**
Append *ExtraArg1, ExtraArg2,...* to the argument list of *Goal* and call the result. For example, 
\[
\text{call}(\text{plus}(1), 2, X) \quad \text{will call} \quad \text{plus}(1, 2, X), \text{binding} \ X \text{to} \ 3.
\]

The call/[2..] construct is handled by the compiler. The predicates call/[2-8] are defined as real (meta-)predicates and are available to inspection through current_predicate/1, predicate_property/2, etc.\(^{18}\) Higher arities are handled by the compiler and runtime system, but the predicates are not accessible for inspection.\(^{19}\)

**apply(:Goal, +List)**
Append the members of *List* to the arguments of *Goal* and call the resulting term. For example:
\[
\text{apply}(\text{plus}(1), [2, X]) \quad \text{calls} \quad \text{plus}(1, 2, X).
\]
New code should use call/[2..] if the length of *List* is fixed.

**not(:Goal)**
True if *Goal* cannot be proven. Retained for compatibility only. New code should use \+/1.

**once(:Goal)**
Defined as:
\[
\text{once}(\text{Goal}) :-
\quad \text{Goal}, !.
\]
\(\text{once/1 can in many cases be replaced with } \rightarrow /2\). The only difference is how the cut behaves (see \!/0). The following two clauses are identical:

1) \(a :- \text{once}((b, c)), d.\)
2) \(a :- b, c \rightarrow d.\)

**ignore(:Goal)**
Calls *Goal* as once/1, but succeeds, regardless of whether *Goal* succeeded or not. Defined as:
\[
\text{ignore}(\text{Goal}) :-
\quad \text{Goal}, !.
\]

**call_with_depth_limit(:Goal, +Limit, -Result)**
If *Goal* can be proven without recursion deeper than *Limit* levels, 
call_with_depth_limit/3 succeeds, binding *Result* to the deepest recursion level 
used during the proof. Otherwise, *Result* is unified with depth_limit_exceeded if the

---

\(^{18}\) Arities 2..8 are demanded by ISO/IEC 13211-1:1995/Cor.2:2012.

\(^{19}\) Future versions of the reflective predicate may fake the presence of call/9.. Full logical behaviour, generating all these pseudo predicates, is probably undesirable and will become impossible if max arity is removed.
limit was exceeded during the proof, or the entire predicate fails if \textit{Goal} fails without exceeding \textit{Limit}.

The depth limit is guarded by the internal machinery. This may differ from the depth computed based on a theoretical model. For example, \texttt{true/0} is translated into an inline virtual machine instruction. Also, \texttt{repeat/0} is not implemented as below, but as a non-deterministic foreign predicate.

\begin{verbatim}
repeat.
repeat :-
  repeat.
\end{verbatim}

As a result, \texttt{call_with_depth_limit/3} may still loop infinitely on programs that should theoretically finish in finite time. This problem can be cured by using Prolog equivalents to such built-in predicates.

This predicate may be used for theorem provers to realise techniques like \textit{iterative deepening}. It was implemented after discussion with Steve Moyle \texttt{smoyle@ermine.ox.ac.uk}.

\textbf{setup\_call\_cleanup(\texttt{:Setup}, \texttt{:Goal}, \texttt{:Cleanup})}

Calls \texttt{(once(Setup), \texttt{Goal})}. If \texttt{Setup} succeeds, \texttt{Cleanup} will be called exactly once after \texttt{Goal} is finished: either on failure, deterministic success, commit, or an exception. The execution of \texttt{Setup} is protected from asynchronous interrupts like \texttt{call_with_time_limit/2} (package \texttt{clib}) or \texttt{thread_signal/2}. In most uses, \texttt{Setup} will perform temporary side-effects required by \texttt{Goal} that are finally undone by \texttt{Cleanup}.

Success or failure of \texttt{Cleanup} is ignored, and choice-points it created are destroyed (as \texttt{once/1}). If \texttt{Cleanup} throws an exception, this is executed as normal.\footnote{\textbf{BUG}: During the execution of \texttt{Cleanup}, garbage collection and stack-shifts are disabled.}

Typically, this predicate is used to cleanup permanent data storage required to execute \texttt{Goal}, close file descriptors, etc. The example below provides a non-deterministic search for a term in a file, closing the stream as needed.

\begin{verbatim}
term_in_file(Term, File) :-
  setup_call_cleanup(open(File, read, In),
    term_in_stream(Term, In),
    close(In) ).

term_in_stream(Term, In) :-
  repeat,
  read(In, T),
  ( T == end_of_file -> !, fail
    ; T = Term
  ).
\end{verbatim}
4.9. META-CALL PREDICATES

Note that it is impossible to implement this predicate in Prolog. The closest approximation would be to read all terms into a list, close the file and call member/2. Without setup_call_cleanup/3 there is no way to gain control if the choice-point left by repeat/0 is removed by a cut or an exception.

setup_call_cleanup/3 can also be used to test determinism of a goal, providing a portable alternative to deterministic/1:

?- setup_call_cleanup(true, (X=1;X=2), Det=yes).
X = 1 ;
X = 2,
Det = yes ;

This predicate is under consideration for inclusion into the ISO standard. For compatibility with other Prolog implementations see call_cleanup/2.

setup_call_catcher_cleanup(:Setup, :Goal, +Catcher, :Cleanup)
Similar to setup_call_cleanup(Setup, Goal, Cleanup) with additional information on the reason for calling Cleanup. Prior to calling Cleanup, Catcher unifies with the termination code (see below). If this unification fails, Cleanup is not called.

exit
Goal succeeded without leaving any choice-points.

fail
Goal failed.
!
Goal succeeded with choice-points and these are now discarded by the execution of a cut (or other pruning of the search tree such as if-then-else).

exception(Exception)
Goal raised the given Exception.

external_exception(Exception)
Goal succeeded with choice-points and these are now discarded due to an exception. For example:

?- setup_call_catcher_cleanup(true, (X=1;X=2),
CatchCr, writeln(Catcher)),
throw(ball).
external_exception(ball)
ERROR: Unhandled exception: Unknown message: ball

call_cleanup(:Goal, :Cleanup)
Same as setup_call_cleanup(true, Goal, Cleanup). This is provided for compatibility with a number of other Prolog implementations only. Do not use call_cleanup/2 if you perform side-effects prior to calling that will be undone by Cleanup. Instead, use setup_call_cleanup/3 with an appropriate first argument to perform those side-effects.
4.10 ISO compliant Exception handling

SWI-Prolog defines the predicates catch/3 and throw/1 for ISO compliant raising and catching of exceptions. In the current implementation (as of 4.0.6), most of the built-in predicates generate exceptions, but some obscure predicates merely print a message, start the debugger and fail, which was the normal behaviour before the introduction of exceptions.

**catch(:Goal, +Catcher, :Recover)**

Behaves as call/1 if no exception is raised when executing Goal. If an exception is raised using throw/1 while Goal executes, and the Goal is the innermost goal for which Catcher unifies with the argument of throw/1, all choice-points generated by Goal are cut, the system backtracks to the start of catch/3 while preserving the thrown exception term, and Recover is called as in call/1.

The overhead of calling a goal through catch/3 is comparable to call/1. Recovery from an exception is much slower, especially if the exception term is large due to the copying thereof.

**throw(+Exception)**

Raise an exception. The system looks for the innermost catch/3 ancestor for which Exception unifies with the Catcher argument of the catch/3 call. See catch/3 for details.

ISO demands that throw/1 make a copy of Exception, walk up the stack to a catch/3 call, backtrack and try to unify the copy of Exception with Catcher. SWI-Prolog delays making a copy of Exception and backtracking until it actually finds a matching catch/3 goal. The advantage is that we can start the debugger at the first possible location while preserving the entire exception context if there is no matching catch/3 goal. This approach can lead to different behaviour if Goal and Catcher of catch/3 call shared variables. We assume this to be highly unlikely and could not think of a scenario where this is useful.²¹

If an exception is raised in a call-back from C (see chapter 9) and not caught in the same call-back, PL_next_solution() fails and the exception context can be retrieved using PL_exception().

4.10.1 Debugging and exceptions

Before the introduction of exceptions in SWI-Prolog a runtime error was handled by printing an error message, after which the predicate failed. If the Prolog flag debug_on_error was in effect (default), the tracer was switched on. The combination of the error message and trace information is generally sufficient to locate the error.

With exception handling, things are different. A programmer may wish to trap an exception using catch/3 to avoid it reaching the user. If the exception is not handled by user code, the interactive top-level will trap it to prevent termination.

If we do not take special precautions, the context information associated with an unexpected exception (i.e., a programming error) is lost. Therefore, if an exception is raised which is not caught

²¹I’d like to acknowledge Bart Demoen for his clarifications on these matters.
using catch/3 and the top-level is running, the error will be printed, and the system will enter trace mode.

If the system is in a non-interactive call-back from foreign code and there is no catch/3 active in the current context, it cannot determine whether or not the exception will be caught by the external routine calling Prolog. It will then base its behaviour on the Prolog flag debug_on_error:

- current_prolog_flag(debug_on_error, false)
  The exception does not trap the debugger and is returned to the foreign routine calling Prolog, where it can be accessed using PL_exception(). This is the default.

- current_prolog_flag(debug_on_error, true)
  If the exception is not caught by Prolog in the current context, it will trap the tracer to help analyse the context of the error.

While looking for the context in which an exception takes place, it is advised to switch on debug mode using the predicate debug/0. The hook prolog_exception_hook/4 can be used to add more debugging facilities to exceptions. An example is the library http/http_error, generating a full stack trace on errors in the HTTP server library.

### 4.10.2 The exception term

Built-in predicates generate exceptions using a term error(Formal, Context). The first argument is the ‘formal’ description of the error, specifying the class and generic defined context information. When applicable, the ISO error term definition is used. The second part describes some additional context to help the programmer while debugging. In its most generic form this is a term of the form context(Name/Arity, Message), where Name/Arity describes the built-in predicate that raised the error, and Message provides an additional description of the error. Any part of this structure may be a variable if no information was present.

### 4.10.3 Printing messages

The predicate print_message/2 is used to print a message term in a human-readable format. The other predicates from this section allow the user to refine and extend the message system. A common usage of print_message/2 is to print error messages from exceptions. The code below prints errors encountered during the execution of Goal, without further propagating the exception and without starting the debugger.

```prolog
...,
catch(Goal, E, 
  ( print_message(error, E),
    fail 
  )), 
...```

Another common use is to define message_hook/3 for printing messages that are normally silent, suppressing messages, redirecting messages or make something happen in addition to printing the message.
print_message(+Kind, +Term)

The predicate print_message/2 is used by the system and libraries to print messages. Kind describes the nature of the message, while Term is a Prolog term that describes the content. Printing messages through this indirection instead of using format/3 to the stream user_error allows displaying the message appropriate to the application (terminal, logfile, graphics), acting on messages based on their content instead of a string (see message_hook/3) and creating language specific versions of the messages. See also section 4.10.3. The following message kinds are known:

banner
The system banner message. Banner messages can be suppressed by setting the Prolog flag verbose to silent.

debug(Topic)
Message from library(debug). See debug/3.

error
The message indicates an errorous situation. This kind is used to print uncaught exceptions of type error(Formal, Context). See section introduction (section 4.10.3).

help
User requested help message, for example after entering ‘h’ or ‘?’ to a prompt.

information
Information that is requested by the user. An example is statistics/0.

informational
Typically messages of events are progres that are considered useful to a developer. Such messages can be suppressed by setting the Prolog flag verbose to silent.

silent
Message that is normally not printed. Applications may define message_hook/3 to act upon such messages.

trace
Messages from the (commandline) tracer.

warning
The message indicates something dubious that is not considered fatal. For example, discontiguous predicates (see discontiguous/1).

The predicate print_message/2 first translates the Term into a list of ‘message lines’ (see print_message_lines/3 for details). Next, it calls the hook message_hook/3 to allow the user to intercept the message. If message_hook/3 fails it prints the message unless Kind is silent.

The print_message/2 predicate and its rules are in the file ⟨plhome⟩/boot/messages.pl, which may be inspected for more information on the error messages and related error terms. If you need to write messages from your own predicates, it is recommended to reuse the existing message terms if applicable. If no existing message term is applicable, invent a fairly unique term that represents the event and define a rule for the multifile predicate prolog:message//1. See section 4.10.3 for a deeper discussion and examples.

See also message_to_string/2.
print_message_lines(+Stream, +Prefix, +Lines)
Print a message (see print_message/2) that has been translated to a list of message elements. The elements of this list are:

\[
\langle \text{Format} \rangle - \langle \text{Args} \rangle
\]
Where Format is an atom and Args is a list of format arguments. Handed to format/3.

flush
If this appears as the last element, Stream is flushed (see flush_output/1) and no final newline is generated. This is combined with a subsequent message that starts with at_same_line to complete the line.

at_same_line
If this appears as first element, no prefix is printed for the first line and the line position is not forced to 0 (see format/1, ^N).

ansi(+Attributes, +Format, +Args)
This message may be intercepted by means of the hook prolog:message_line_element/2. The library ansi_term implements this hook to achieve coloured output. If it is not intercepted it invokes format(Stream, Format, Args).

nl
A new line is started. If the message is not complete, Prefix is printed before the remainder of the message.

begin(Kind, Var)
end(Var)
The entire message is headed by begin(Kind, Var) and ended by end(Var). This feature is used by, e.g., library ansi_term to colour entire messages.

\[
\text{\langle Format\rangle}
\]
Handed to format/3 as format(Stream, Format, []). Deprecated because it is ambiguous if Format collides with one of the atomic commands.

See also print_message/2 and message_hook/3.

message_hook(+Term, +Kind, +Lines)
Hook predicate that may be defined in the module user to intercept messages from print_message/2. Term and Kind are the same as passed to print_message/2. Lines is a list of format statements as described with print_message_lines/3. See also message_to_string/2.

This predicate must be defined dynamic and multifile to allow other modules defining clauses for it too.

thread_message_hook(+Term, +Kind, +Lines)
As message_hook/3, but this predicate is local to the calling thread (see thread_local/1). This hook is called before message_hook/3. The ‘pre-hook’ is indented to catch messages they may be produced by calling some goal without affecting other threads.

message_property(+Kind, ?Property)
This hook can be used to define additional message kinds and the way they are displayed. The following properties are defined:
color(-Attributes)
Print message using ANSI terminal attributes. See ansi.format/3 for details. Here is an example, printing help messages in blue:

```prolog
:- multifile user:message_property/2.
user:message_property(help, color([fg(blue)])).
```

prefix(-Prefix)
Prefix printed before each line. This argument is handed to format/3. The default is '˜N'. For example, messages of kind \texttt{warning} use '˜N\texttt{Warning:}'.

location_prefix(+Location, -FirstPrefix, -ContinuePrefix)
Used for printing messages that are related to a source location. Currently, \texttt{Location} is a term \texttt{File:Line}. \texttt{FirstPrefix} is the prefix for the first line and \texttt{-ContinuePrefix} is the prefix for continuation lines. For example, the default for errors is

```prolog
location_prefix(File:Line, ˜NERROR: ˜w:˜d:−[File,Line], ˜N	)).
```

stream(-Stream)
Stream to which to print the message. Default is \texttt{user_error}.

wait(-Seconds)
Amount of time to wait after printing the message. Default is not to wait.

prolog:message_line_element(+Stream, +Term)
This hook is called to print the individual elements of a message from \texttt{print_message_lines/3}. This hook is used by e.g., library ansi_term to colour messages on ANSI-capable terminals.

message_to_string(+Term, -String)
Translates a message term into a string object (see section 4.23).

Printing from libraries
Libraries should not use format/3 or other output predicates directly. Libraries that print informational output directly to the console are hard to use from code that depend on your textual output, such as a CGI script. The predicates in section 4.10.3 define the API for dealing with messages. The idea behind this is that a library that wants to provide information about its status, progress, events or problems calls \texttt{print_message/2}. The first argument is the \texttt{level}. The supported levels are described with \texttt{print_message/2}. Libraries typically use informational and \texttt{warning}, while libraries should use exceptions for errors (see \texttt{throw/1}, \texttt{type_error/2}, etc.).

The second argument is an arbitrary Prolog term that carries the information of the message, but not the precise text. The text is defined by the grammar rule prolog:message//1. This distinction is made to allow for translations and to allow hooks processing the information in a different way (e.g., to translate progress messages into a progress bar).

For example, suppose we have a library that must download data from the Internet (e.g., based on \texttt{http_open/3}). The library wants to print the progress after each downloaded file. The code below is a good skeleton:
The programmer can now specify the default textual output using the rule below. Note that this rule may be in the same file or anywhere else. Notably, the application may come with several rule sets for different languages. This, and the user-hook example below are the reason to represent the message as a compound term rather than a string. This is similar to using message numbers in non-symbolic languages. The documentation of `print_message_lines/3` describes the elements that may appear in the output list.

```prolog
:- multifile
    prolog:message//1.

prolog:message(download_url(URL, I, Total)) -->
    { Perc is round(I*100/Total) },
    [ 'Downloaded \w; \D from \D (\d\%)ʼ-[URL, I, Total, Perc] ].
```

A user of the library may define rules for `message_hook/3`. The rule below acts on the message content. Other applications can act on the message level and, for example, popup a message box for warnings and errors.

```prolog
:- multifile user:message_hook/3.

message_hook(download_url(URL, I, Total), _Kind, _Lines) :-
    <send this information to a GUI component>
```

In addition, using the commandline option `-q`, the user can disable all `informational` messages.

## 4.11 Handling signals

As of version 3.1.0, SWI-Prolog is able to handle software interrupts (signals) in Prolog as well as in foreign (C) code (see section 9.4.13).

Signals are used to handle internal errors (execution of a non-existing CPU instruction, arithmetic domain errors, illegal memory access, resource overflow, etc.), as well as for dealing with asynchronous interprocess communication.

Signals are defined by the POSIX standard and part of all Unix machines. The MS-Windows Win32 provides a subset of the signal handling routines, lacking the vital functionality to raise a signal in another thread for achieving asynchronous interprocess (or interthread) communication (Unix `kill()` function).
on_signal(+Signal, -Old, :New)
Determine the reaction on Signal. Old is unified with the old behaviour, while the behaviour is switched to New. As with similar environment control predicates, the current value is retrieved using on_signal(Signal, Current, Current).

The action description is an atom denoting the name of the predicate that will be called if Signal arrives. on_signal/3 is a meta-predicate, which implies that ⟨Module⟩:⟨Name⟩ refers to ⟨Name⟩/1 in module ⟨Module⟩. The handler is called with a single argument: the name of the signal as an atom. The Prolog names for signals are explained below.

Two predicate names have special meaning. throw implies Prolog will map the signal onto a Prolog exception as described in section 4.10. default resets the handler to the settings active before SWI-Prolog manipulated the handler.

Signals bound to a foreign function through PL_signal() are reported using the term $foreign_function(Address).

After receiving a signal mapped to throw, the exception raised has the following structure:

\[
\text{error(signal(⟨SigName⟩, ⟨SigNum⟩), ⟨Context⟩)}
\]

The signal names are defined by the POSIX standard as symbols of the form SIG(SIGNAME). The Prolog name for a signal is the lowercase version of ⟨SIGNAME⟩. The predicate current_signal/3 may be used to map between names and signals.

Initially, some signals are mapped to throw, while all other signals are default. The following signals throw an exception: fpe, alrm, xcpu, xfsz and vtalrm.

current_signal(?Name, ?Id, ?Handler)
Enumerate the currently defined signal handling. Name is the signal name, Id is the numerical identifier and Handler is the currently defined handler (see on_signal/3).

4.11.1 Notes on signal handling

Before deciding to deal with signals in your application, please consider the following:

- **Portability**
  On MS-Windows, the signal interface is severely limited. Different Unix brands support different sets of signals, and the relation between signal name and number may vary. Currently, the system only supports signals numbered 1 to 32. Installing a signal outside the limited set of supported signals in MS-Windows crashes the application.

- **Safety**
  Immediately delivered signals (see below) are unsafe. This implies that foreign functions called from a handler cannot safely use the SWI-Prolog API and cannot use C longjmp(). Handlers defined as throw are unsafe. Handlers defined to call a predicate are safe. Note that the predicate can call throw/1, but the delivery is delayed until Prolog is in a safe state.

The C-interface described in section 9.4.13 provides the option PL_SIGSYNC to select either safe synchronous or unsafe asynchronous delivery.

---

22-TBD: the system should support the Unix realtime signals
• *Time of delivery*

Using `throw` or a foreign handler, signals are delivered immediately (as defined by the OS). When using a Prolog predicate, delivery is delayed to a safe moment. Blocking system calls or foreign loops may cause long delays. Foreign code can improve on that by calling `PL_handle_signals()`.

Signals are blocked when the garbage collector is active.

## 4.12 DCG Grammar rules

Grammar rules form a comfortable interface to *difference lists*. They are designed both to support writing parsers that build a parse tree from a list of characters or tokens and for generating a flat list from a term.

Grammar rules look like ordinary clauses using `-->/2` for separating the head and body rather than `:-/2`. Expanding grammar rules is done by `expand_term/2`, which adds two additional arguments to each term for representing the difference list.

The body of a grammar rule can contain three types of terms. A callable term is interpreted as a reference to a grammar rule. Code between `{ ... }` is interpreted as plain Prolog code, and finally, a list is interpreted as a sequence of *literals*. The Prolog control-constructs (`\+/1`, `->/2`, `;/2`, `/2` and `!/0`) can be used in grammar rules.

We illustrate the behaviour by defining a rule set for parsing an integer.

```
integer(I) -->
  digit(D0),
  digits(D),
  { number_codes(I, [D0|D]) }
).

digits([D|T]) -->
  digit(D), !,
  digits(T).

digits([]) -->
  [].

digit(D) -->
  [D],
  { code_type(D, digit) }
).
```

Grammar rule sets are called using the built-in predicates `phrase/2` and `phrase/3`:

```
phrase(DCGBody, ?List)
  Equivalent to `phrase(DCGBody, InputList, []).`

phrase(DCGBody, ?List, ?Rest)
  True when `DCGBody` applies to the difference `List/Rest`. Although `DCGBody` is typically a *callable* term that denotes a grammar rule, it can be any term that is valid as the body of a DCG rule.
```
The example below calls the rule set ‘integer’ defined in section 4.12, binding Rest to the remainder of the input after matching the integer.

```
?- phrase(integer(X), "42 times", Rest).
X = 42
Rest = [32, 116, 105, 109, 101, 115]
```

The next example exploits a complete body.

```
digit_weight(W) -->
    [D],
    { code_type(D, digit(W)) }.

?- phrase(("Version ",
    digit_weight(Major), ".", digit_weight(Minor)),
    "Version 3.4").
Major = 3,
Minor = 4.
```

See also portray_text/1, which can be used to print lists of character codes as a string to the top-level and debugger to facilitate debugging DCGs that process character codes. The library apply_macros compiles phrase/3 if the argument is sufficiently instantiated, eliminating the runtime overhead of translating DCGBody and meta-calling.

As stated above, grammar rules are a general interface to difference lists. To illustrate, we show a DCG-based implementation of reverse/2:

```
reverse(List, Reversed) :-
    phrase(reverse(List), Reversed).
reverse([]) --> [].
reverse([H|T]) --> reverse(T), [H].
```

### 4.13 Database

SWI-Prolog offers three different database mechanisms. The first one is the common assert/retract mechanism for manipulating the clause database. As facts and clauses asserted using assert/1 or one of its derivatives become part of the program, these predicates compile the term given to them. retract/1 and retractall/1 have to unify a term and therefore have to decompile the program. For these reasons the assert/retract mechanism is expensive. On the other hand, once compiled, queries to the database are faster than querying the recorded database discussed below. See also dynamic/1.

The second way of storing arbitrary terms in the database is using the ‘recorded database’. In this database terms are associated with a *key*. A key can be an atom, small integer or term. In the last case
only the functor and arity determine the key. Each key has a chain of terms associated with it. New terms can be added either at the head or at the tail of this chain.

Following the Edinburgh tradition, SWI-Prolog provides database keys to clauses and records in the recorded database. As of 5.9.10, these keys are represented by non-textual atoms (‘blobs’, see section 9.4.7), which makes accessing the database through references safe.

The third mechanism is a special-purpose one. It associates an integer or atom with a key, which is an atom, integer or term. Each key can only have one atom or integer associated with it.

\texttt{abolish(+PredicatIndicator)}

Removes all clauses of a predicate with functor \textit{Functor} and arity \textit{Arity} from the database. All predicate attributes (dynamic, multifile, index, etc.) are reset to their defaults. Abolishing an imported predicate only removes the import link; the predicate will keep its old definition in its definition module.

According to the ISO standard, \texttt{abolish/1} can only be applied to dynamic procedures. This is odd, as for dealing with dynamic procedures there is already \texttt{retract/1} and \texttt{retractall/1}. The \texttt{abolish/1} predicate was introduced in DEC-10 Prolog precisely for dealing with static procedures. In SWI-Prolog, \texttt{abolish/1} works on static procedures, unless the Prolog flag \texttt{iso} is set to \texttt{true}.

It is advised to use \texttt{retractall/1} for erasing all clauses of a dynamic predicate.

\texttt{abolish(+Name, +Arity)}

Same as \texttt{abolish(Name/Arity)}. The predicate \texttt{abolish/2} conforms to the Edinburgh standard, while \texttt{abolish/1} is ISO compliant.

\texttt{copy_predicate_clauses(:From, :To)}

Copy all clauses of predicate \textit{From} to \textit{To}. The predicate \textit{To} must be dynamic or undefined. If \textit{To} is undefined, it is created as a dynamic predicate holding a copy of the clauses of \textit{From}. If \textit{To} is a dynamic predicate, the clauses of \textit{From} are added (as in \texttt{assertz/1}) to the clauses of \textit{To}. \textit{To} and \textit{From} must have the same arity. Acts as if defined by the program below, but at a much better performance by avoiding decompilation and compilation.

\begin{verbatim}
copy_predicate_clauses(From, To) :-
    head(From, MF:FromHead),
    head(To, MT:ToHead),
    FromHead =.. [\_|Args],
    ToHead =.. [\_|Args],
    forall(clause(MF:FromHead, Body),
        assertz(MT:ToHead, Body)).

head(From, M:Head) :-
    strip_module(From, M, Name/Arity),
    functor(Head, Name, Arity).
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{redefine_system_predicate(+Head)}

This directive may be used both in module \texttt{user} and in normal modules to redefine any system predicate. If the system definition is redefined in module \texttt{user}, the new definition is
the default definition for all sub-modules. Otherwise the redefinition is local to the module. The system definition remains in the module system.

Redefining system predicate facilitates the definition of compatibility packages. Use in other contexts is discouraged.

retract(+Term)  [ISO]
When Term is an atom or a term it is unified with the first unifying fact or clause in the database. The fact or clause is removed from the database.

retractall(+Head)  [ISO]
All facts or clauses in the database for which the head unifies with Head are removed. If Head refers to a predicate that is not defined, it is implicitly created as a dynamic predicate. See also dynamic/1.23

asserta(+Term)  [ISO]
Assert a fact or clause in the database. Term is asserted as the first fact or clause of the corresponding predicate. Equivalent to assert/1, but Term is asserted as first clause or fact of the predicate.

assertz(+Term)  [ISO]
Equivalent to asserta/1, but Term is asserted as the last clause or fact of the predicate.

assert(+Term)
Equivalent to assertz/1. Deprecated: new code should use assertz/1.

asserta(+Term, -Reference)
Asserts a clause as asserta/1 and unifies Reference with a handle to this clause. The handle can be used to access this specific clause using clause/3 and erase/1.

assertz(+Term, -Reference)
Equivalent to asserta/1, asserting the new clause as the last clause of the predicate.

assert(+Term, -Reference)
Equivalent to assertz/2. Deprecated: new code should use assertz/2.

recorda(+Key, +Term, -Reference)
Assert Term in the recorded database under key Key. Key is a small integer (range min_tagged_integer ... max_tagged_integer, atom or compound term. If the key is a compound term, only the name and arity define the key. Reference is unified with an opaque handle to the record (see erase/1).

recorda(+Key, +Term)
Equivalent to recorda(Key, Term, _).

recordz(+Key, +Term, -Reference)
Equivalent to recorda/3, but puts the Term at the tail of the terms recorded under Key.

recordz(+Key, +Term)
Equivalent to recordz(Key, Term, _).

23The ISO standard only allows using dynamic/1 as a directive.
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recorded(?Key, ?Value, ?Reference)

True if Value is recorded under Key and has the given database Reference. If Reference is given, this predicate is semi-deterministic. Otherwise, it must be considered non-deterministic. If neither Reference nor Key is given, the triples are generated as in the code snippet below.\textsuperscript{24} See also current_key/1.

\[
\begin{align*}
current\_key(\text{Key}),
\text{recorded}(\text{Key}, \text{Value}, \text{Reference})
\end{align*}
\]

recorded(+Key, -Value)

Equivalent to recorded(Key, Value, _).

erase(+Reference)

Erase a record or clause from the database. Reference is a db-reference returned by recorda/3, recordz/3 or recorded/3, clause/3, assert/2, asserta/2 or assertz/2. Fail silently if the referenced object no longer exists.

instance(+Reference, -Term)

Unify Term with the referenced clause or database record. Unit clauses are represented as Head :- true.

flag(+Key, -Old, +New)

Key is an atom, integer or term. As with the recorded database, if Key is a term, only the name and arity are used to locate the flag. Unify Old with the old value associated with Key. If the key is used for the first time Old is unified with the integer 0. Then store the value of New, which should be an integer, float, atom or arithmetic expression, under Key. flag/3 is a fast mechanism for storing simple facts in the database. The flag database is shared between threads and updates are atomic, making it suitable for generating unique integer counters.\textsuperscript{25}

4.13.1 Update view

Traditionally, Prolog systems used the immediate update view: new clauses became visible to predicates backtracking over dynamic predicates immediately, and retracted clauses became invisible immediately.

Starting with SWI-Prolog 3.3.0 we adhere to the logical update view, where backtrackable predicates that enter the definition of a predicate will not see any changes (either caused by assert/1 or retract/1) to the predicate. This view is the ISO standard, the most commonly used and the most ‘safe’.\textsuperscript{26} Logical updates are realised by keeping reference counts on predicates and generation information on clauses. Each change to the database causes an increment of the generation of the database. Each goal is tagged with the generation in which it was started. Each clause is flagged with the generation it was created in as well as the generation it was erased from. Only clauses with a ‘created’ ... ‘erased’ interval that encloses the generation of the current goal are considered visible.

\textsuperscript{24}Note that, without a given Key, some implementations return triples in the order defined by recorda/2 and recordz/2.

\textsuperscript{25}The flag/3 predicate is not portable. Non-backtrackable global variables (nb_setval/2) and non-backtrackable assignment (nb_setarg/3) are more widely recognised special-purpose alternatives for non-backtrackable and/or global states.

\textsuperscript{26}For example, using the immediate update view, no call to a dynamic predicate is deterministic.
4.13.2 Indexing databases

The indexing capabilities of SWI-Prolog are described in section 2.17. Summarizing, SWI-Prolog creates indexes for any applicable argument, but only on one argument, and does not index on arguments of compound terms. The predicates below provide building blocks to circumvent the limitations of the current indexing system.

Programs that aim at portability should consider using \texttt{term_hash/2} and \texttt{term_hash/4} to design their database such that indexing on constant or functor (name/arity reference) on the first argument is sufficient.

\texttt{term\_hash(+Term, -HashKey)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[det]}

If \texttt{Term} is a ground term (see \texttt{ground/1}), \texttt{HashKey} is unified with a positive integer value that may be used as a hash key to the value. If \texttt{Term} is not ground, the predicate leaves \texttt{HashKey} an unbound variable. Hash keys are in the range $0 \ldots 16,777,215$, the maximal integer that can be stored efficiently on both 32 and 64 bit platforms.

This predicate may be used to build hash tables as well as to exploit argument indexing to find complex terms more quickly.

The hash key does not rely on temporary information like addresses of atoms and may be assumed constant over different invocations and versions of SWI-Prolog.\footnote{Last change: version 5.10.4} Hashes differ between big and little endian machines. The \texttt{term\_hash/2} predicate is cycle-safe.\footnote{BUG: All arguments that (indirectly) lead to a cycle have the same hash key.}

\texttt{term\_hash(+Term, +Depth, +Range, -HashKey)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[det]}

As \texttt{term\_hash/2}, but only considers \texttt{Term} to the specified \texttt{Depth}. The top-level term has depth 1, its arguments have depth 2, etc. That is, \texttt{Depth = 0} hashes nothing; \texttt{Depth = 1} hashes atomic values or the functor and arity of a compound term, not its arguments; \texttt{Depth = 2} also indexes the immediate arguments, etc.

\texttt{HashKey} is in the range $[0 \ldots \text{Range} - 1]$. \texttt{Range} must be in the range $[1 \ldots 2147483647]$.

\texttt{variant\_sha1(+Term, -SHA1)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[det]}

Compute a SHA1-hash from \texttt{Term}. The hash is represented as a 40-byte hexadecimal atom. Unlike \texttt{term\_hash/2} and friends, this predicate produces a hash key for non-ground terms. The hash is invariant over variable-renaming (see \texttt{=@=/2}) and constants over different invocations of Prolog.\footnote{BUG: The hash depends on word order (big/little-endian) and the wordsize (32/64 bits).}

This predicate raises an exception when trying to compute the hash on a cyclic term or attributed term. Attributed terms are not handled because \texttt{subsumes\_chk/2} is not considered well defined for attributed terms. Cyclic terms are not supported because this would require establishing a canonical cycle. That is, given A=[a—a] and B=[a,a—B], A and B should produce the same hash. This is not (yet) implemented.

This hash was developed for lookup of solutions to a goal stored in a table. By using a cryptographic hash, heuristic algorithms can often ignore the possibility of hash collisions and thus avoid storing the goal term itself as well as testing using \texttt{=@=/2}.

\footnote{Last change: version 5.10.4}
4.14 Declaring predicate properties

This section describes directives which manipulate attributes of predicate definitions. The functors `dynamic/1`, `multifile/1`, `discontiguous/1` and `public/1` are operators of priority 1150 (see `op/3`), which implies that the list of predicates they involve can just be a comma-separated list:

```prolog
:- dynamic
    foo/0,
    baz/2.
```

In SWI-Prolog all these directives are just predicates. This implies they can also be called by a program. Do not rely on this feature if you want to maintain portability to other Prolog implementations.

**dynamic** :`PredicateIndicator; ...`

[ISO]
Informs the interpreter that the definition of the predicate(s) may change during execution (using `assert/1` and/or `retract/1`). In the multi-threaded version, the clauses of dynamic predicates are shared between the threads. The directive `thread_local/1` provides an alternative where each thread has its own clause list for the predicate. Dynamic predicates can be turned into static ones using `compile_predicates/1`.

**compile_predicates(WithOptions)**

Compile a list of specified dynamic predicates (see `dynamic/1` and `assert/1`) into normal static predicates. This call tells the Prolog environment the definition will not change anymore and further calls to `assert/1` or `retract/1` on the named predicates raise a permission error. This predicate is designed to deal with parts of the program that are generated at runtime but do not change during the remainder of the program execution.\(^{30}\)

**multifile** :`PredicateIndicator; ...`

[ISO]
Informs the system that the specified predicate(s) may be defined over more than one file. This stops `consult/1` from redefining a predicate when a new definition is found.

**discontiguous** :`PredicateIndicator; ...`

[ISO]
Informs the system that the clauses of the specified predicate(s) might not be together in the source file. See also `style_check/1`.

**public** :`PredicateIndicator; ...`

Instructs the cross-referencer that the predicate can be called. It has no semantics.\(^{31}\) The public declaration can be queried using `predicate_property/2`. The `public/1` directive does not export the predicate (see `module/1` and `export/1`). The public directive is used for (1) direct calls into the module from, e.g., foreign code, (2) direct calls into the module from other modules, or (3) flag a predicate as being called if the call is generated by meta-calling constructs that are not analysed by the cross-referencer.

---

\(^{30}\)The specification of this predicate is from Richard O’Keefe. The implementation is allowed to optimise the predicate. This is not yet implemented. In multi-threaded Prolog, however, static code runs faster as it does not require synchronisation. This is particularly true on SMP hardware.

\(^{31}\)This declaration is compatible with SICStus. In YAP, `public/1` instructs the compiler to keep the source. As the source is always available in SWI-Prolog, our current interpretation also enhances the compatibility with YAP.
4.15 Examining the program

current_atom(-Atom)
Successively unifies Atom with all atoms known to the system. Note that current_atom/1 always succeeds if Atom is instantiated to an atom.

current_blob(?Blob, ?Type)
Examine the type or enumerate blobs of the given Type. Typed blobs are supported through the foreign language interface for storing arbitrary BLOBs (Binary Large Object) or handles to external entities. See section 9.4.7 for details.

current_functor(?Name, ?Arity)
Successively unifies Name with the name and Arity with the arity of functors known to the system.

current_flag(-FlagKey)
Successively unifies FlagKey with all keys used for flags (see flag/3).

current_key(-Key)
Successively unifies Key with all keys used for records (see record/3, etc.).

current_predicate(:PredicateIndicator) [ISO]
True if PredicateIndicator is a currently defined predicate. A predicate is considered defined if it exists in the specified module, is imported into the module or is defined in one of the modules from which the predicate will be imported if it is called (see section 5.9). Note that current_predicate/1 does not succeed for predicates that can be autoloaded. See also current_predicate/2 and predicate_property/2.

If PredicateIndicator is not fully specified, the predicate only generates values that are defined in or already imported into the target module. Generating all callable predicates therefore requires enumerating modules using current_module/1. Generating predicates callable in a given module requires enumerating the import modules using import_module/2 and the autoloadable predicates using the predicate_property/2 autoload.

current_predicate(?Name, :Head)
Classical pre-ISO implementation of current_predicate/1, where the predicate is represented by the head term. The advantage is that this can be used for checking the existence of a predicate before calling it without the need for functor/3:

```
call_if_exists(G) :-
    current_predicate(_, G),
    call(G).
```

Because of this intended usage, current_predicate/2 also succeeds if the predicate can be autoloaded. Unfortunately, checking the autoloader makes this predicate relatively slow, in particular because a failed lookup of the autoloader will cause the autoloader to verify that its index is up-to-date.
predicate_property(:Head, ?Property)
True when Head refers to a predicate that has property Property. With sufficiently instantiated Head, predicate_property/2 tries to resolve the predicate the same way as calling it would do: if the predicate is not defined it scans the default modules (see default_module/2) and finally tries the autoloader. Unlike calling, failure to find the target predicate causes predicate_property/2 to fail silently. If Head is not sufficiently bound, only currently locally defined and already imported predicates are enumerated. See current_predicate/1 for enumerating all predicates. A common issue concerns generating all built-in predicates. This can be achieved using the code below:

```
generate_built_in(Name/Arity) :-
   predicate_property(system:Head, built_in),
   functor(Head, Name, Arity),
   \+ sub_atom(Name, 0, _, _, $). % discard reserved names
```

Property is one of:

**autoload(File)**
True if the predicate can be autoloaded from the file File. Like undefined, this property is not generated.

**built_in**
True if the predicate is locked as a built-in predicate. This implies it cannot be redefined in its definition module and it can normally not be seen in the tracer.

**dynamic**
True if assert/1 and retract/1 may be used to modify the predicate. This property is set using dynamic/1.

**exported**
True if the predicate is in the public list of the context module.

**imported_from(Module)**
Is true if the predicate is imported into the context module from module Module.

**file(FileName)**
Unify FileName with the name of the source file in which the predicate is defined. See also source_file/2 and the property line_count. Note that this reports the file of the first clause of a predicate. A more robust interface can be achieved using nth_clause/3 and clause_property/2.

**foreign**
True if the predicate is defined in the C language.

**indexed(Indexes)**
Indexes\(^{32}\) is a list of additional (hash) indexes on the predicate. Each element of the list is a term ArgSpec-Index. Currently ArgSpec is an integer denoting the argument position and Index is a term hash(Buckets, Speedup, IsList). Here Buckets is the number of buckets in the hash and Speedup is the expected speedup relative to trying all clauses

---

32This predicate property should be used for analysis and statistics only. The exact representation of Indexes may change between versions.
IsList indicates that a list is created for all clauses with the same key. This is currently not used.

interpreted
True if the predicate is defined in Prolog. We return true on this because, although the code is actually compiled, it is completely transparent, just like interpreted code.

iso
True if the predicate is covered by the ISO standard (ISO/IEC 13211-1).

line_count(LineNumber)
Unify LineNumber with the line number of the first clause of the predicate. Fails if the predicate is not associated with a file. See also source_file/2. See also the file property above, notably the reference to clause_property/2.

multifile
True if there may be multiple (or no) files providing clauses for the predicate. This property is set using multifile/1.

meta_predicate(Head)
If the predicate is declared as a meta-predicate using meta_predicate/1, unify Head with the head-pattern. The head-pattern is a compound term with the same name and arity as the predicate where each argument of the term is a meta-predicate specifier. See meta_predicate/1 for details.

nodebug
Details of the predicate are not shown by the debugger. This is the default for built-in predicates. User predicates can be compiled this way using the Prolog flag generate_debug_info.

notrace
Do not show ports of this predicate in the debugger.

number_of_clauses(ClauseCount)
Unify ClauseCount to the number of clauses associated with the predicate. Fails for foreign predicates.

number_of_rules(RuleCount)
Unify RuleCount to the number of clauses associated with the predicate. A rule is defined as a clauses that has a body that is not just true (i.e., a fact). Fails for foreign predicates. This property is used to avoid analysing predicates with only facts in prolog_codewalk.

public
Predicate is declared public using public/1. Note that without further definition, public predicates are considered undefined and this property is not reported.

thread_local
If true (only possible on the multi-threaded version) each thread has its own clauses for the predicate. This property is set using thread_local/1.

transparent
True if the predicate is declared transparent using the module_transparent/1 or meta_predicate/1 declaration. In the latter case the property meta_predicate(Head) is also provided. See chapter 5 for details.
undefined
True if a procedure definition block for the predicate exists, but there are no clauses for it and it is not declared dynamic or multifile. This is true if the predicate occurs in the body of a loaded predicate, an attempt to call it has been made via one of the meta-call predicates, or the predicate had a definition in the past. See the library package check for example usage.

visible
True when predicate can be called without raising a predicate existence error. This means that the predicate is (1) defined, (2) can be inherited from one of the default modules (see default_module/2) or (3) can be autoloaded. The behaviour is logically consistent iff the property visible is provided explicitly. If the property is left unbound, only defined predicates are enumerated.

volatile
If true, the clauses are not saved into a saved state by qsave_program/[1,2]. This property is set using volatile/1.

dwim_predicate(+Term, -Dwim)
‘Do What I Mean’ (‘dwim’) support predicate. Term is a term, whose name and arity are used as a predicate specification. Dwim is instantiated with the most general term built from Name and the arity of a defined predicate that matches the predicate specified by Term in the ‘Do What I Mean’ sense. See dwim_match/2 for ‘Do What I Mean’ string matching. Internal system predicates are not generated, unless the access level is system (see access_level). Backtracking provides all alternative matches.

clause(+Head, ?Body)
[ISO]
True if Head can be unified with a clause head and Body with the corresponding clause body. Gives alternative clauses on backtracking. For facts, Body is unified with the atom true.

clause(+Head, ?Body, ?Reference)
Equivalent to clause/2, but unifies Reference with a unique reference to the clause (see also assert/2, erase/1). If Reference is instantiated to a reference the clause’s head and body will be unified with Head and Body.

nth_clause(+Pred, ?Index, ?Reference)
Provides access to the clauses of a predicate using their index number. Counting starts at 1. If Reference is specified it unifies Pred with the most general term with the same name/arity as the predicate and Index with the index number of the clause. Otherwise the name and arity of Pred are used to determine the predicate. If Index is provided, Reference will be unified with the clause reference. If Index is unbound, backtracking will yield both the indexes and the references of all clauses of the predicate. The following example finds the 2nd clause of append/3:

?- use_module(library(lists)).
...
?- nth_clause(append(_,_,_), 2, Ref), clause(Head, Body, Ref).
Ref = <clause>(0x994290),
Head = lists:append([_G23|_G24], _G21, [_G23|_G27]),
clause_property(+ClauseRef, -Property)
Queries properties of a clause. ClauseRef is a reference to a clause as produced by clause/3, nth_clause/3 or prolog_frame_attribute/3. Unlike most other predicates that access clause references, clause_property/2 may be used to get information about erased clauses that have not yet been reclaimed. Property is one of the following:

file(FileName)
Unify FileName with the name of the file in which the clause textually appears. Fails if the clause is created by loading a file (e.g., clauses added using assertz/1). See also source.

line_count(LineNumber)
Unify LineNumber with the line number of the clause. Fails if the clause is not associated to a file.

source(FileName)
Unify FileName with the name of the source file that created the clause. This is the same as the file property, unless the file is loaded from a file that is textually included into source using include/1. In this scenario, file is the included file, while the source property refers to the main file.

fact
True if the clause has no body.

erased
True if the clause has been erased, but not yet reclaimed because it is referenced.

predicate(PredicateIndicator)
PredicateIndicator denotes the predicate to which this clause belongs. This is needed to obtain information on erased clauses because the usual way to obtain this information using clause/3 fails for erased clauses.

4.16 Input and output
SWI-Prolog provides two different packages for input and output. The native I/O system is based on the ISO standard predicates open/3, close/1 and friends. Being more widely portable and equipped with a clearer and more robust specification, new code is encouraged to use these predicates for manipulation of I/O streams.

Section 4.16.3 describes tell/1, see/1 and friends, providing I/O in the spirit of the traditional Edinburgh standard. These predicates are layered on top of the ISO predicates. Both packages are fully integrated; the user may switch freely between them.

4.16.1 Predefined stream aliases
Each thread has five stream aliases: user_input, user_output, user_error, current_input, and current_output. Newly created threads inherit these stream aliases from their parent. The user_input, user_output and user_error aliases of the main thread are initially bound to the standard operating system I/O streams (stdin, stdout and stderr.

---

33 Actually based on Quintus Prolog, providing this interface before the ISO standard existed.
normally bound to the POSIX file handles 0, 1 and 2). These aliases may be re-bound, for example if standard I/O refers to a window such as in the swipl-win.exe GUI executable for Windows. They can be re-bound by the user using set_prolog_IO/3 and set_stream/2 by setting the alias of a stream (e.g., set_stream(S, alias(user_output))). An example of rebinding can be found in library prolog_server, providing a telnet service. The aliases current_input and current_output define the source and destination for predicates that do not take a stream argument (e.g., read/1, write/1, get_code/1,...). Initially, these are bound to the same stream as user_input and user_error. They are re-bound by see/1, tell/1, set_input/1 and set_output/1. The current_output stream is also temporary re-bound by with_output_to/2 or format/3 using e.g., format(atom(A), ...). Note that code which explicitly writes to the streams user_output and user_error will not be redirected by with_output_to/2.

**Compatibility** Note that the ISO standard only defines the user_* streams. The ‘current’ streams can be accessed using current_input/1 and current_output/1. For example, an ISO compatible implementation of write/1 is

```prolog
write(Term) :- current_output(Out), write_term(Out, Term).
```

while SWI-Prolog additionally allows for

```prolog
write(Term) :- write(current_output, Term).
```

### 4.16.2 ISO Input and Output Streams

The predicates described in this section provide ISO compliant I/O, where streams are explicitly created using the predicate open/3. The resulting stream identifier is then passed as a parameter to the reading and writing predicates to specify the source or destination of the data.

This schema is not vulnerable to filename and stream ambiguities as well as changes to the working directory. On the other hand, using the notion of current-I/O simplifies reusability of code without the need to pass arguments around. E.g., see with_output_to/2.

SWI-Prolog streams are, compatible with the ISO standard, either input or output streams. To accommodate portability to other systems, a pair of streams can be packed into a *stream-pair*. See stream_pair/3 for details.

SWI-Prolog stream handles are unique symbols that have no syntactical representation. They are written as \bnfmeta{stream}(hex-number), which is not valid input for read/1. They are realised using a *blob* of type stream (see blob/2 and section 9.4.7).

```prolog
open(+SrcDest, +Mode, -Stream, +Options) [ISO]
```

ISO compliant predicate to open a stream. *SrcDest* is either an atom specifying a file, or a term 'pipe (Command)', like see/1 and tell/1. *Mode* is one of read, write, append or update. Mode append opens the file for writing, positioning the file pointer at the end. Mode update opens the file for writing, positioning the file pointer at the beginning of the file without truncating the file. *Stream* is either a variable, in which case it is bound to an integer
identifying the stream, or an atom, in which case this atom will be the stream identifier.\footnote{New code should use the alias(Alias) option for compatibility with the ISO standard.} The Options list can contain the following options:

\textbf{type}(\texttt{Type})

Using type \texttt{text} (default), Prolog will write a text file in an operating system compatible way. Using type \texttt{binary} the bytes will be read or written without any translation. See also the option \texttt{encoding}.

\textbf{alias}(\texttt{Atom})

Gives the stream a name. Below is an example. Be careful with this option as stream names are global. See also \texttt{set_stream/2}.

\begin{verbatim}
?- open(data, read, Fd, [alias(input)]).
   ...,
   read(input, Term),
   ...
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{encoding}(\texttt{Encoding})

Define the encoding used for reading and writing text to this stream. The default encoding for type \texttt{text} is derived from the Prolog flag \texttt{encoding}. For \texttt{binary} streams the default encoding is \texttt{octet}. For details on encoding issues, see section 2.18.1.

\textbf{bom}(\texttt{Bool})

Check for a BOM (Byte Order Marker) or write one. If omitted, the default is \texttt{true} for mode \texttt{read} and \texttt{false} for mode \texttt{write}. See also \texttt{stream_property/2} and especially section 2.18.1 for a discussion of this feature.

\textbf{eof\_action}(\texttt{Action})

Defines what happens if the end of the input stream is reached. Action \texttt{eof\_code} makes get\_0/1 and friends return \texttt{-1}, and read\_1 and friends return the atom \texttt{end\_of\_file}. Repetitive reading keeps yielding the same result. Action \texttt{error} is like \texttt{eof\_code}, but repetitive reading will raise an error. With action \texttt{reset}, Prolog will examine the file again and return more data if the file has grown.

\textbf{buffer}(\texttt{Buffering})

Defines output buffering. The atom \texttt{full} (default) defines full buffering, \texttt{line} buffering by line, and \texttt{false} implies the stream is fully unbuffered. Smaller buffering is useful if another process or the user is waiting for the output as it is being produced. See also \texttt{flush\_output/[0,1]}. This option is not an ISO option.

\textbf{close\_on\_abort}(\texttt{Bool})

If \texttt{true} (default), the stream is closed on an abort (see \texttt{abort/0}). If \texttt{false}, the stream is not closed. If it is an output stream, however, it will be flushed. Useful for logfiles and if the stream is associated to a process (using the \texttt{pipe/1} construct).

\textbf{lock}(\texttt{LockingMode})

Try to obtain a lock on the open file. Default is \texttt{none}, which does not lock the file. The value \texttt{read} or \texttt{shared} means other processes may read the file, but not write it. The value \texttt{write} or \texttt{exclusive} means no other process may read or write the file.
Locks are acquired through the POSIX function fcntl() using the command F_SETLKW, which makes a blocked call wait for the lock to be released. Please note that fcntl() locks are advisory and therefore only other applications using the same advisory locks honour your lock. As there are many issues around locking in Unix, especially related to NFS (network file system), please study the fcntl() manual page before trusting your locks!

The `lock` option is a SWI-Prolog extension.

`wait(Bool)`

This option can be combined with the `lock` option. If `false` (default `true`), the open call returns immediately with an exception if the file is locked. The exception has the format `permission_error(lock, source_sink, SrcDest)`.

The option `reposition` is not supported in SWI-Prolog. All streams connected to a file may be repositioned.

`open(+SrcDest, +Mode, ?Stream)  [ISO]`

Equivalent to `open/4` with an empty option list.

`open_null_stream(?Stream)  [ISO]`

Open an output stream that produces no output. All counting functions are enabled on such a stream. It can be used to discard output (like Unix `/dev/null`) or exploit the counting properties. The initial encoding of `Stream` is `utf8`, enabling arbitrary Unicode output. The encoding can be changed to determine byte counts of the output in a particular encoding or validate if output is possible in a particular encoding. For example, the code below determines the number of characters emitted when writing `Term`.

```prolog
write_length(Term, Len) :-
    open_null_stream(Out),
    write(Out, Term),
    character_count(Out, Len0),
    close(Out),
    Len = Len0.
```

`close(+Stream)  [ISO]`

Close the specified stream. If `Stream` is not open, an existence error is raised. However, closing a stream multiple times may crash Prolog. This is particularly true for multi-threaded applications.

If the closed stream is the current input or output stream, the terminal is made the current input or output.

`close(+Stream, +Options)  [ISO]`

Provides `close(Stream, [force(true)])` as the only option. Called this way, any resource errors (such as write errors while flushing the output buffer) are ignored.

`stream_property(?Stream, ?StreamProperty)  [ISO]`

ISO compatible predicate for querying the status of open I/O streams. `StreamProperty` is one of:
alias(Atom)
If Atom is bound, test if the stream has the specified alias. Otherwise unify Atom with the first alias of the stream.\footnote{BUG: Backtracking does not give other aliases.}

buffer(Buffering)
SWI-Prolog extension to query the buffering mode of this stream. Buffering is one of full, line or false. See also open/4.

buffer_size(Integer)
SWI-Prolog extension to query the size of the I/O buffer associated to a stream in bytes. Fails if the stream is not buffered.

bom(Bool)
If present and true, a BOM (Byte Order Mark) was detected while opening the file for reading, or a BOM was written while opening the stream. See section 2.18.1 for details.

close_on_abort(Bool)
Determine whether or not abort/0 closes the stream. By default streams are closed.

close_on_exec(Bool)
Determine whether or not the stream is closed when executing a new process (exec() in Unix, CreateProcess() in Windows). Default is to close streams. This maps to fcntl() F_SETFD using the flag FD_CLOEXEC on Unix and (negated) HANDLE_FLAG_INHERIT on Windows.

encoding(Encoding)
Query the encoding used for text. See section 2.18.1 for an overview of wide character and encoding issues in SWI-Prolog.

end_of_stream(E)
If Stream is an input stream, unify E with one of the atoms not, at or past. See also at_end_of_stream/[0,1].

eof_action(A)
Unify A with one of eof_code, reset or error. See open/4 for details.

file_name(Atom)
If Stream is associated to a file, unify Atom to the name of this file.

file_no(Integer)
If the stream is associated with a POSIX file descriptor, unify Integer with the descriptor number. SWI-Prolog extension used primarily for integration with foreign code. See also Sfileno() from SWI-Stream.h.

input
True if Stream has mode read.

mode(IOMode)
Unify IOMode to the mode given to open/4 for opening the stream. Values are: read, write, append and the SWI-Prolog extension update.

newline(NewlineMode)
One of posix or dos. If dos, text streams will emit \r\n for \n and discard \r from input streams. Default depends on the operating system.
nlink(-Count)
Number of hard links to the file. This expresses the number of ‘names’ the file has. Not supported on all operating systems and the value might be bogus. See the documentation of fstat() for your OS and the value st_nlink.

output
True if Stream has mode write, append or update.

position(Pos)
Unify Pos with the current stream position. A stream position is an opaque term whose fields can be extracted using stream_position_data/3. See also set_stream_position/2.

reposition(Bool)
Unify Bool with true if the position of the stream can be set (see seek/4). It is assumed the position can be set if the stream has a seek-function and is not based on a POSIX file descriptor that is not associated to a regular file.

representation_errors(Mode)
Determines behaviour of character output if the stream cannot represent a character. For example, an ISO Latin-1 stream cannot represent Cyrillic characters. The behaviour is one of error (throw an I/O error exception), prolog (write \...\ escape code) or xml (write &\#...; XML character entity). The initial mode is prolog for the user streams and error for all other streams. See also section 2.18.1 and set_stream/2.

timeout(-Time)
Time is the timeout currently associated with the stream. See set_stream/2 with the same option. If no timeout is specified, Time is unified to the atom infinite.

type(Type)
Unify Type with text or binary.

tty(Bool)
This property is reported with Bool equal to true if the stream is associated with a terminal. See also set_stream/2.

current_stream(?Object, ?Mode, ?Stream)
The predicate current_stream/3 is used to access the status of a stream as well as to generate all open streams. Object is the name of the file opened if the stream refers to an open file, an integer file descriptor if the stream encapsulates an operating system stream, or the atom [] if the stream refers to some other object. Mode is one of read or write.

is_stream(+Term)
True if Term is a stream name or valid stream handle. This predicate realises a safe test for the existence of a stream alias or handle.

stream_pair(?StreamPair, ?Read, ?Write)
This predicate can be used in mode (-,+,+) to create a stream-pair from an input stream and an output stream. Stream-pairs can be used by all I/O operations on streams, where the operation selects the appropriate member of the pair. The predicate close/1 closes both streams of the pair. Mode (+,-,-) can be used to get access to the underlying streams.
set_stream_position(+Stream, +Pos)  
Set the current position of Stream to Pos. Pos is a term as returned by stream_property/2 using the position(Pos) property. See also seek/4.

stream_position_data(?Field, +Pos, -Data)  
Extracts information from the opaque stream position term as returned by stream_property/2 requesting the position(Pos) property. Field is one of line_count, line_position, char_count or byte_count. See also line_count/2, line_position/2, character_count/2 and byte_count/2.\footnote{Introduced in version 5.6.4 after extending the position term with a byte count. Compatible with SICStus Prolog.}

seek(+Stream, +Offset, +Method, -NewLocation)  
Reposition the current point of the given Stream. Method is one of bof, current or eof, indicating positioning relative to the start, current point or end of the underlying object. NewLocation is unified with the new offset, relative to the start of the stream. Positions are counted in ‘units’. A unit is 1 byte, except for text files using 2-byte Unicode encoding (2 bytes) or wchar encoding (sizeof(wchar_t)). The latter guarantees comfortable interaction with wide-character text objects. Otherwise, the use of seek/4 on non-binary files (see open/4) is of limited use, especially when using multi-byte text encodings (e.g. UTF-8) or multi-byte newline files (e.g. DOS/Windows). On text files, SWI-Prolog offers reliable backup to an old position using stream_property/2 and set_stream_position/2. Skipping $N$ character codes is achieved calling get_code/2 $N$ times or using copy_stream_data/3, directing the output to a null stream (see open_null_stream/1). If the seek modifies the current location, the line number and character position in the line are set to 0.

If the stream cannot be repositioned, a permission_error is raised. If applying the offset would result in a file position less than zero, a domain_error is raised. Behaviour when seeking to positions beyond the size of the underlying object depend on the object and possibly the operating system. The predicate seek/4 is compatible with Quintus Prolog, though the error conditions and signalling is ISO compliant. See also stream_property/2 and set_stream_position/2.

set_stream(+Stream, +Attribute)  
Modify an attribute of an existing stream. Attribute specifies the stream property to set. See also stream_property/2 and open/4.

alias(AliasName)  
Set the alias of an already created stream. If AliasName is the name of one of the standard streams, this stream is rebound. Thus, set_stream(S, current_input) is the same as set_input/1, and by setting the alias of a stream to user_input, etc., all user terminal input is read from this stream. See also interactor/0.

buffer(Buffering)  
Set the buffering mode of an already created stream. Buffering is one of full, line or false.

buffer_size(+Size)  
Set the size of the I/O buffer of the underlying stream to Size bytes.
4.16. INPUT AND OUTPUT

**close_on_abort**(*Bool*)
Determine whether or not the stream is closed by `abort/0`. By default, streams are closed.

**close_on_exec**(*Bool*)
Set the `close_on_exec` property. See `stream_property/2`.

**encoding**(*Atom*)
Defines the mapping between bytes and character codes used for the stream. See section 2.18.1 for supported encodings.

**eof_action**(*Action*)
Set end-of-file handling to one of `eof_code`, `reset` or `error`.

**file_name**(*FileName*)
Set the filename associated to this stream. This call can be used to set the file for error locations if `Stream` corresponds to `FileName` and is not obtained by opening the file directly but, for example, through a network service.

**line_position**(*LinePos*)
Set the line position attribute of the stream. This feature is intended to correct position management of the stream after sending a terminal escape sequence (e.g., setting ANSI character attributes). Setting this attribute raises a permission error if the stream does not record positions. See `line_position/2` and `stream_property/2` (property position).

**newline**(*NewlineMode*)
Set input or output translation for newlines. See corresponding `stream_property/2` for details. In addition to the detected modes, an input stream can be set in mode `detect`. It will be set to `dos` if a `\r` character was removed.

**timeout**(*Seconds*)
This option can be used to make streams generate an exception if it takes longer than `Seconds` before any new data arrives at the stream. The value `infinite` (default) makes the stream block indefinitely. Like `wait_for_input/3`, this call only applies to streams that support the `select()` system call. For further information about timeout handling, see `wait_for_input/3`. The exception is of the form

```
error(timeout_error(read, Stream), _)  
```

**type**(*Type*)
Set the type of the stream to one of `text` or `binary`. See also `open/4` and the `encoding` property of streams. Switching to `binary` sets the encoding to `octet`. Switching to `text` sets the encoding to the default text encoding.

**record_position**(*Bool*)
Do/do not record the line count and line position (see `line_count/2` and `line_position/2`).

**representation_errors**(*Mode*)
Change the behaviour when writing characters to the stream that cannot be represented by the encoding. See also `stream_property/2` and section 2.18.1.

**tty**(*Bool*)
Modify whether Prolog thinks there is a terminal (i.e. human interaction) connected
to this stream. On Unix systems the initial value comes from isatty(). On Windows, the initial user streams are supposed to be associated to a terminal. See also `stream_property/2`.

`set_prolog_IO(+In, +Out, +Error)`

Prepare the given streams for interactive behaviour normally associated to the terminal. `In` becomes the `user_input` and `current_input` of the calling thread. `Out` becomes `user_output` and `current_output`. If `Error` equals `Out` an unbuffered stream is associated to the same destination and linked to `user_error`. Otherwise `Error` is used for `user_error`. Output buffering for `Out` is set to line and buffering on `Error` is disabled. See also `prolog/0` and `set_stream/2`. The `clib` package provides the library `prolog_server`, creating a TCP/IP server for creating an interactive session to Prolog.

### 4.16.3 Edinburgh-style I/O

The package for implicit input and output destinations is (almost) compatible with Edinburgh DEC-10 and C-Prolog. The reading and writing predicates refer to, resp., the `current` input and output streams. Initially these streams are connected to the terminal. The current output stream is changed using `tell/1` or `append/1`. The current input stream is changed using `see/1`. The stream’s current value can be obtained using `telling/1` for output and `seeing/1` for input.

Source and destination are either a file, `user`, or a term `pipe(Command)`. The reserved stream name `user` refers to the terminal. In the predicate descriptions below we will call the source/destination argument ‘`SrcDest`’. Below are some examples of source/destination specifications.

```prolog
?- see(data). % Start reading from file ‘data’.
?- tell(user). % Start writing to the terminal.
?- tell(pipe(lpr)). % Start writing to the printer.
```

Another example of using the `pipe/1` construct is shown below. Note that the `pipe/1` construct is not part of Prolog’s standard I/O repertoire.

```prolog
getwd(Wd) :-
    seeing(Old), see(pipe(pwd)),
    collect_wd(String),
    seen, see(Old),
    atom_codes(Wd, String).

collect_wd([C|R]) :-
    get0(C), C \== -1, !,
    collect_wd(R).
collect_wd([]).
```

---

37. The ISO I/O layer uses `user_input`, `user_output` and `user_error`.

38. As of version 5.3.15, the pipe construct is supported in the MS-Windows version, both for `swipl.exe` and `swipl-win.exe`. The implementation uses code from the LUA programming language (http://www.lua.org).
The effect of \texttt{tell/1} is not undone on backtracking, and since the stream handle is not specified explicitly in further I/O operations when using Edinburgh-style I/O, you may write to unintended streams more easily than when using ISO compliant I/O. For example, the following query writes both "a" and "b" into the file ‘out’: 

\begin{verbatim}
?- (tell(out), write(a), false ; write(b)), told.
\end{verbatim}

\subsection*{Compatibility notes}

Unlike Edinburgh Prolog systems, \texttt{telling/1} and \texttt{seeing/1} do not return the filename of the current input/output but rather the stream identifier, to ensure the design pattern below works under all circumstances:\footnote{Filenames can be ambiguous and SWI-Prolog streams can refer to much more than just files.}

\begin{verbatim}
..., 
telling(Old), tell(x), 
..., 
told, tell(Old), 
..., 
\end{verbatim}

The predicates \texttt{tell/1} and \texttt{see/1} first check for user, the pipe\texttt{(command)} and a stream handle. Otherwise, if the argument is an atom it is first compared to open streams associated to a file with \textit{exactly} the same name. If such a stream exists, created using \texttt{tell/1} or \texttt{see/1}, output (input) is switched to the open stream. Otherwise a file with the specified name is opened.

The behaviour is compatible with Edinburgh Prolog. This is not without problems. Changing directory, non-file streams, and multiple names referring to the same file easily lead to unexpected behaviour. New code, especially when managing multiple I/O channels, should consider using the ISO I/O predicates defined in section 4.16.2.

\textbf{see(+SrcDest)}

Open \texttt{SrcDest} for reading and make it the current input (see \texttt{set_input/1}). If \texttt{SrcDest} is a stream handle, just make this stream the current input. See the introduction of section 4.16.3 for details.

\textbf{tell(+SrcDest)}

Open \texttt{SrcDest} for writing and make it the current output (see \texttt{set_output/1}). If \texttt{SrcDest} is a stream handle, just make this stream the current output. See the introduction of section 4.16.3 for details.

\textbf{append(+File)}

Similar to \texttt{tell/1}, but positions the file pointer at the end of \texttt{File} rather than truncating an existing file. The pipe construct is not accepted by this predicate.

\textbf{seeing(?SrcDest)}

Same as \texttt{current_input/1}, except that user is returned if the current input is the stream \texttt{user_input} to improve compatibility with traditional Edinburgh I/O. See the introduction of section 4.16.3 for details.
**telling(?SrcDest)**
Same as `current_output/1`, except that `user` is returned if the current output is the stream `user_output` to improve compatibility with traditional Edinburgh I/O. See the introduction of section 4.16.3 for details.

**seen**
Close the current input stream. The new input stream becomes `user_input`.

**told**
Close the current output stream. The new output stream becomes `user_output`.

### 4.16.4 Switching between Edinburgh and ISO I/O

The predicates below can be used for switching between the implicit and the explicit stream-based I/O predicates.

**set_input(+Stream)**  
Set the current input stream to become `Stream`. Thus, `open(file, read, Stream), set_input(Stream)` is equivalent to `see(file)`.

**set_output(+Stream)**  
Set the current output stream to become `Stream`. See also `with_output_to/2`.

**current_input(-Stream)**  
Get the current input stream. Useful for getting access to the status predicates associated with streams.

**current_output(-Stream)**  
Get the current output stream.

### 4.16.5 Write onto atoms, code-lists, etc.

**with_output_to(+Output, :Goal)**
Run `Goal` as `once/1`, while characters written to the current output are sent to `Output`. The predicate is SWI-Prolog-specific, inspired by various posts to the mailinglist. It provides a flexible replacement for predicates such as `sformat/3`, `swritef/3`, `term_to_atom/2`, `atom_number/2` converting numbers to atoms, etc. The predicate `format/3` accepts the same terms as output argument.

Applications should generally avoid creating atoms by breaking and concatenating other atoms, as the creation of large numbers of intermediate atoms generally leads to poor performance, even more so in multi-threaded applications. This predicate supports creating difference lists from character data efficiently. The example below defines the DCG rule `term//1` to insert a term in the output:

```prolog
term(Term, In, Tail) :-
    with_output_to(codes(In, Tail), write(Term)).
?- phrase(term(hello), X).
```
A Stream handle or alias
Temporarily switch current output to the given stream. Redirection using with_output_to/2 guarantees the original output is restored, also if Goal fails or raises an exception. See also call_cleanup/2.

atom(-Atom)
Create an atom from the emitted characters. Please note the remark above.

string(-String)
Create a string object as defined in section 4.23.

codes(-Codes)
Create a list of character codes from the emitted characters, similar to atom_codes/2.

codes(-Codes, -Tail)
Create a list of character codes as a difference list.

chars(-Chars)
Create a list of one-character atoms from the emitted characters, similar to atom_chars/2.

chars(-Chars, -Tail)
Create a list of one-character atoms as a difference list.

4.17 Status of streams

wait_for_input(+ListOfStreams, -ReadyList, +TimeOut)
Wait for input on one of the streams in ListOfStreams and return a list of streams on which input is available in ReadyList. wait_for_input/3 waits for at most TimeOut seconds. Timeout may be specified as a floating point number to specify fractions of a second. If Timeout equals infinite, wait_for_input/3 waits indefinitely.\(^{40}\)

This predicate can be used to implement timeout while reading and to handle input from multiple sources. The following example will wait for input from the user and an explicitly opened second terminal. On return, Inputs may hold user_input or P4 or both.

?- open(’/dev/ttyp4’, read, P4),
   wait_for_input([user_input, P4], Inputs, 0).

This predicate relies on the select() call on most operating systems. On Unix this call is implemented for any stream referring to a file handle, which implies all OS-based streams: sockets, terminals, pipes, etc. On non-Unix systems select() is generally only implemented for socket-based streams. See also socket from the clib package.

Note that wait_for_input/3 returns streams that have data waiting. This does not mean you can, for example, call read/2 on the stream without blocking as the stream might hold an

\(^{40}\)For compatibility reasons, a Timeout value of 0 (integer) also waits indefinitely. To call select() without giving up the CPU, pass the float 0.0. If compatibility with versions older than 5.1.3 is desired, pass the float value 1.0e-7.
incomplete term. The predicate set_stream/2 using the option timeout(Seconds) can be used to make the stream generate an exception if no new data arrives within the timeout period. Suppose two processes communicate by exchanging Prolog terms. The following code makes the server immune for clients that write an incomplete term:

```prolog
..., 
tcp_accept(Server, Socket, _Peer),
tcp_open(Socket, In, Out),
set_stream(In, timeout(10)),
catch(read(In, Term), _, (close(Out), close(In), fail)),
..., 
```

**byte_count(+Stream, -Count)**

Byte position in Stream. For binary streams this is the same as character_count/2. For text files the number may be different due to multi-byte encodings or additional record separators (such as Control-M in Windows).

**character_count(+Stream, -Count)**

Unify Count with the current character index. For input streams this is the number of characters read since the open; for output streams this is the number of characters written. Counting starts at 0.

**line_count(+Stream, -Count)**

Unify Count with the number of lines read or written. Counting starts at 1.

**line_position(+Stream, -Count)**

Unify Count with the position on the current line. Note that this assumes the position is 0 after the open. Tabs are assumed to be defined on each 8-th character, and backspaces are assumed to reduce the count by one, provided it is positive.

### 4.18 Primitive character I/O

See section 4.2 for an overview of supported character representations.

**nl**

Write a newline character to the current output stream. On Unix systems nl/0 is equivalent to put(10).

**nl(+Stream)**

Write a newline to Stream.

**put(+Char)**

Write Char to the current output stream. Char is either an integer expression evaluating to a character code or an atom of one character. Deprecated. New code should use put_char/1 or put_code/1.

**put(+Stream, +Char)**

Write Char to Stream. See put/1 for details.
4.18. PRIMITIVE CHARACTER I/O

put_byte(+Byte)  
Write a single byte to the output. \textit{Byte} must be an integer between 0 and 255.

\texttt{put\_byte(Stream, \texttt{+Byte})}  
Write a single byte to \textit{Stream}. \textit{Byte} must be an integer between 0 and 255.

put_char(+Char)  
Write a character to the current output, obeying the encoding defined for the current output stream. Note that this may raise an exception if the encoding of the output stream cannot represent \textit{Char}.

\texttt{put\_char(Stream, \texttt{+Char})}  
Write a character to \textit{Stream}, obeying the encoding defined for \textit{Stream}. Note that this may raise an exception if the encoding of \textit{Stream} cannot represent \textit{Char}.

put_code(+Code)  
Similar to \texttt{put\_char/1}, but using a character code. \textit{Code} is a non-negative integer. Note that this may raise an exception if the encoding of the output stream cannot represent \textit{Code}.

\texttt{put\_code(Stream, \texttt{+Code})}  
Same as \texttt{put\_code/1} but directing \textit{Code} to \textit{Stream}.

tab(+Amount)  
Write \textit{Amount} spaces on the current output stream. \textit{Amount} should be an expression that evaluates to a positive integer (see section 4.26).

tab(Stream, +Amount)  
Write \textit{Amount} spaces to \textit{Stream}.

flush\_output  
Flush pending output on current output stream. \texttt{flush\_output/0} is automatically generated by \texttt{read/1} and derivatives if the current input stream is \texttt{user} and the cursor is not at the left margin.

flush\_output(Stream)  
Flush output on the specified stream. The stream must be open for writing.

ttyflush  
Flush pending output on stream \texttt{user}. See also \texttt{flush\_output/[0,1]}.

get\_byte(-Byte)  
Read the current input stream and unify the next byte with \textit{Byte} (an integer between 0 and 255). \textit{Byte} is unified with -1 on end of file.

get\_byte(Stream, -Byte)  
Read the next byte from \textit{Stream} and unify \textit{Byte} with an integer between 0 and 255.

get\_code(-Code)  
Read the current input stream and unify \textit{Code} with the character code of the next character. \textit{Code} is unified with -1 on end of file. See also \texttt{get\_char/1}.
CHAPTER 4. BUILT-IN PREDICATES

get_code(+Stream, -Code)  [ISO]
   Read the next character code from Stream.

get_char(-Char)  [ISO]
   Read the current input stream and unify Char with the next character as a one-character atom.
   See also atom_chars/2. On end-of-file, Char is unified to the atom end_of_file.

get_char(+Stream, -Char)  [ISO]
   Unify Char with the next character from Stream as a one-character atom. See also get_char/2, get_byte/2 and get_code/2.

get0(-Char)  [deprecated]
   Edinburgh version of the ISO get_code/1 predicate. Note that Edinburgh Prolog didn’t support wide characters and therefore technically speaking get0/1 should have been mapped to get_byte/1. The intention of get0/1, however, is to read character codes.

get0(+Stream, -Char)  [deprecated]
   Edinburgh version of the ISO get_code/2 predicate. See also get0/1.

get(-Char)  [deprecated]
   Read the current input stream and unify the next non-blank character with Char. Char is unified with -1 on end of file. The predicate get/1 operates on character codes. See also get0/1.

get(+Stream, -Char)  [deprecated]
   Read the next non-blank character from Stream. See also get/1, get0/1 and get0/2.

peek_byte(-Byte)  [ISO]
peek_byte(+Stream, -Byte)  [ISO]
peek_code(-Code)  [ISO]
peek_code(+Stream, -Code)  [ISO]
peek_char(-Char)  [ISO]
peek_char(+Stream, -Char)  [ISO]
   Read the next byte/code/char from the input without removing it. These predicates do not modify the stream’s position or end-of-file status. These predicates require a buffered stream (see set_stream/2) and raise a permission error if the stream is unbuffered or the buffer is too small to hold the longest multi-byte sequence that might need to be buffered.

skip(+Code)
   Read the input until Code or the end of the file is encountered. A subsequent call to get_code/1 will read the first character after Code.

skip(+Stream, +Code)
   Skip input (as skip/1) on Stream.

get_single_char(-Code)
   Get a single character from input stream ‘user’ (regardless of the current input stream). Unlike get_code/1, this predicate does not wait for a return. The character is not echoed to the user’s terminal. This predicate is meant for keyboard menu selection, etc. If SWI-Prolog was started with the -tty option this predicate reads an entire line of input and returns the first
4.18. PRIMITIVE CHARACTER I/O

non-blank character on this line, or the character code of the newline (10) if the entire line consisted of blank characters.

**at_end_of_stream**

Succeeds after the last character of the current input stream has been read. Also succeeds if there is no valid current input stream.

**at_end_of_stream(+Stream)**

Succeeds after the last character of the named stream is read, or Stream is not a valid input stream. The end-of-stream test is only available on buffered input streams (unbuffered input streams are rarely used; see open/4).

**set_end_of_stream(+Stream)**

Set the size of the file opened as Stream to the current file position. This is typically used in combination with the open-mode update.

**copy_stream_data(+StreamIn, +StreamOut, +Len)**

Copy Len codes from StreamIn to StreamOut. Note that the copy is done using the semantics of get_code/2 and put_code/2, taking care of possibly recoding that needs to take place between two text files. See section 2.18.1.

**copy_stream_data(+StreamIn, +StreamOut)**

Copy all (remaining) data from StreamIn to StreamOut.

**read_pending_input(+StreamIn, -Codes, ?Tail)**

Read input pending in the input buffer of StreamIn and return it in the difference list Codes-Tail. That is, the available characters codes are used to create the list Codes ending in the tail Tail. This predicate is intended for efficient unbuffered copying and filtering of input coming from network connections or devices.

The following code fragment realises efficient non-blocking copying of data from an input to an output stream. The at_end_of_stream/1 call checks for end-of-stream and fills the input buffer. Note that the use of a get_code/2 and put_code/2 based loop requires a flush_output/1 call after each put_code/2. The copy_stream_data/2 does not allow for inspection of the copied data and suffers from the same buffering issues.

```prolog
copy(In, Out) :-
    repeat,
    ( at_end_of_stream(In)
      -> !
    ;   read_pending_input(In, Chars, []),
      format(Out, '˜s', [Chars]),
      flush_output(Out),
      fail
    ).
```

SWI-Prolog 6.2 Reference Manual
4.19 Term reading and writing

This section describes the basic term reading and writing predicates. The predicates format/[1,2] and writef/2 provide formatted output. Writing to Prolog data structures such as atoms or code-lists is supported by with_output_to/2 and format/3.

Reading is sensitive to the Prolog flag character_escapes, which controls the interpretation of the \ character in quoted atoms and strings.

write_term(+Term, +Options)  [ISO]

The predicate write_term/2 is the generic form of all Prolog term-write predicates. Valid options are:

attributes(Atom)
Define how attributed variables (see section 6.1) are written. The default is determined by the Prolog flag write_attributes. Defined values are ignore (ignore the attribute), dots (write the attributes as {...}), write (simply hand the attributes recursively to write_term/2) and portray (hand the attributes to attr_portray_hook/2).

backquoted_string(Bool)
If true, write a string object (see section 4.23) as ‘...’. The default depends on the Prolog flag backquoted_string.

blobs(Atom)
Define how non-text blobs are handled. By default, this is left to the write handler specified with the blob type. Using portray, portray/1 is called for each blob encountered. See section 9.4.7.

character_escapes(Bool)
If true and quoted(true) is active, special characters in quoted atoms and strings are emitted as ISO escape sequences. Default is taken from the reference module (see below).

cycles(Bool)
If true (default), cyclic terms are written as @(Template, Substitutions), where Substitutions is a list Var = Value. If cycles is false, max_depth is not given, and Term is cyclic, write_term/2 raises a domain_error. See also the cycles option in read_term/2.

ignore_ops(Bool)
If true, the generic term representation (⟨functor⟩⟨args⟩...) will be used for all terms. Otherwise (default), operators, list notation and {}/1 will be written using their special syntax.

max_depth(Integer)
If the term is nested deeper than Integer, print the remainder as ellipses (...). A 0 (zero) value (default) imposes no depth limit. This option also delimits the number of printed items in a list. Example:

?- write_term(a(s(s(s(0)))), [a,b,c,d,e,f]),
     [max_depth(3)]).

41 The cycles option and the cyclic term representation using the @-term are copied from SICStus Prolog. However, the default in SICStus is set to false and SICStus writes an infinite term if not protected by, e.g., the depth_limit option.
4.19. TERM READING AND WRITING

\[ a(s(s(...)), [a, b\ldots]) \]

true.

Used by the top-level and debugger to limit screen output. See also the Prolog flags `toplevel_print_options` and `debugger_print_options`.

**module**(*Module*)

Define the reference module (default `user`). This defines the default value for the `character_escapes` option as well as the operator definitions to use. See also `op/3`.

**numbervars**(*Bool*)

If `true`, terms of the format `$VAR(N)`, where `<N>` is a positive integer, will be written as a variable name. If `<N>` is an atom it is written without quotes. This extension allows for writing variables with user-provided names. The default is `false`. See also `numbervars/3`.

**partial**(*Bool*)

If `true` (default `false`), do not reset the logic that inserts extra spaces that separate tokens where needed. This is intended to solve the problems with the code below. Calling `write_value()` writes `...`, which cannot be read. By adding `partial(true)` to the option list, it correctly emits `..`. Similar problems appear when emitting operators using multiple calls to `write_term/3`.

```prolog
write_value(Value) :-
    write_term(Value, [partial(true)]),
    write(’.’), nl.
```

**portray**(*Bool*)

If `true`, the hook `portray/1` is called before printing a term that is not a variable. If `portray/1` succeeds, the term is considered printed. See also `print/1`. The default is `false`. This option is an extension to the ISO `write_term` options.

**portray_goal**(*Goal*)

Implies `portray(true)`, but calls `Goal` rather than the predefined hook `portray/1`. `Goal` is called through `call/3`, where the first argument is `Goal`, the second is the term to be printed and the 3rd argument is the current write option list. The write option list is copied from the `write_term` call, but the list is guaranteed to hold an option `priority` that reflects the current priority.

**priority**(*Integer*)

An integer between 0 and 1200 representing the ‘context priority’. Default is 1200. Can be used to write partial terms appearing as the argument to an operator. For example:

```prolog
format(’˜w = ’, [VarName]),
write_term(Value, [quoted(true), priority(699)])
```

**quoted**(*Bool*)

If `true`, atoms and functors that need quotes will be quoted. The default is `false`.

**spacing**(*Spacing*)

Determines whether and where extra white space is added to enhance readability. The default is `standard`, adding only space where needed for proper tokenization by
read_term/3. Currently, the only other value is next_argument, adding a space after a comma used to separate arguments in a term or list.

**write_term(+Stream, +Term, +Options)**  
ISO
As write_term/2, but output is sent to Stream rather than the current output.

**write_length(+Term, -Length, +Options)**  
semidet
True when Length is the number of characters emitted for write_termTerm, Options. In addition to valid options for write_term/2, it processes the option:

**max_length(+MaxLength)**
If provided, fail if Length would be larger than MaxLength. The implementation ensures that the runtime is limited when computing the length of a huge term with a bounded maximum.

**write_canonical(+Term)**  
ISO
Write Term on the current output stream using standard parenthesised prefix notation (i.e., ignoring operator declarations). Atoms that need quotes are quoted. Terms written with this predicate can always be read back, regardless of current operator declarations. Equivalent to write_term/2 using the options ignore_ops, quoted and numbervars after numbervars/4 using the singletons option.

Note that due to the use of numbervars/4, non-ground terms must be written using a single write_canonical/1 call. This used to be the case anyhow, as garbage collection between multiple calls to one of the write predicates can change the _G⟨NNN⟩ identity of the variables.

**write_canonical(+Stream, +Term)**  
ISO
Write Term in canonical form on Stream.

**write(+Term)**  
ISO
Write Term to the current output, using brackets and operators where appropriate.

**write(+Stream, +Term)**  
ISO
Write Term to Stream.

**writeq(+Term)**  
ISO
Write Term to the current output, using brackets and operators where appropriate. Atoms that need quotes are quoted. Terms written with this predicate can be read back with read/1 provided the currently active operator declarations are identical.

**writeq(+Stream, +Term)**  
ISO
Write Term to Stream, inserting quotes.

**print(+Term)**
Prints Term on the current output stream similar to write/1, but for each (sub)term of Term, the dynamic predicate portray/1 is first called. If this predicate succeeds print assumes the (sub)term has been written. This allows for user-defined term writing. See also portray_text.

**print(+Stream, +Term)**
Print Term to Stream.
portray(+Term)
   A dynamic predicate, which can be defined by the user to change the behaviour of print/1 on (sub)terms. For each subterm encountered that is not a variable print/1 first calls portray/1 using the term as argument. For lists, only the list as a whole is given to portray/1. If portray/1 succeeds print/1 assumes the term has been written.

read(-Term) [ISO]
   Read the next Prolog term from the current input stream and unify it with Term. On a syntax error read/1 displays an error message, attempts to skip the erroneous term and fails. On reaching end-of-file Term is unified with the atom end_of_file.

read(+Stream, -Term) [ISO]
   Read Term from Stream.

read_clause(+Stream, -Term, +Options)
   Equivalent to read_term/3, but sets options according to the current compilation context and optionally processes comments. Defined options:

syntax_errors(+Atom)
   See read_term/3, but the default is dec10 (report and restart).

term_position(-TermPos)
   Same as for read_term/3.

process_comment(+Boolean)
   If true (default), call prolog:comment_hook(Comments, TermPos, Term) if this multifile hook is defined (see prolog:comment_hook/3). This is used to drive PlDoc.

The singletons option of read_term/3 is initialised from the active style-checking mode. The module option is initialised to the current compilation module (see prolog_load_context/2).

read_term(-Term, +Options) [ISO]
   Read a term from the current input stream and unify the term with Term. The reading is controlled by options from the list of Options. If this list is empty, the behaviour is the same as for read/1. The options are upward compatible with Quintus Prolog. The argument order is according to the ISO standard. Syntax errors are always reported using exception-handling (see catch/3). Options:

backquoted_string(Bool)
   If true, read `...` to a string object (see section 4.23). The default depends on the Prolog flag backquoted_string.

character_escapes(Bool)
   Defines how to read \ escape sequences in quoted atoms. See the Prolog flag character_escapes in current_prolog_flag/2. (SWI-Prolog).

comments(-Comments)
   Unify Comments with a list of Position-Comment, where Position is a stream position object (see stream_position_data/3) indicating the start of a comment and Comment is a string object containing the text including delimiters of a comment. It returns all comments from where the read_term/2 call started up to the end of the term read.
cycles(Bool)
If true (default false), re-instantiate templates as produced by the corresponding write_term/2 option. Note that the default is false to avoid misinterpretation of @$ (Template, Substitutions), while the default of write_term/2 is true because emitting cyclic terms without using the template construct produces an infinitely large term (read: it will generate an error after producing a huge amount of output).

double_quotes(Atom)
Defines how to read "..." strings. See the Prolog flag double_quotes. (SWI-Prolog).

module(Module)
Specify Module for operators, character_escapes flag and double_quotes flag. The value of the latter two is overruled if the corresponding read_term/3 option is provided. If no module is specified, the current ‘source module’ is used. (SWI-Prolog).

singleton(Vars)
As variable_names, but only reports the variables occurring only once in the Term read. Variables starting with an underscore (’_’) are not included in this list. (ISO). If Vars is the constant warning, singleton variables are reported using print_message/2.

syntax_errors(Atom)
If error (default), throw an exception on a syntax error. Other values are fail, which causes a message to be printed using print_message/2, after which the predicate fails, quiet which causes the predicate to fail silently, and dec10 which causes syntax errors to be printed, after which read_term/[2,3] continues reading the next term. Using dec10, read_term/[2,3] never fails. (Quintus, SICStus).

subterm_positions(TermPos)
Describes the detailed layout of the term. The formats for the various types of terms are given below. All positions are character positions. If the input is related to a normal stream, these positions are relative to the start of the input; when reading from the terminal, they are relative to the start of the term.

  From-To
  Used for primitive types (atoms, numbers, variables).

string_position(From, To)
Used to indicate the position of a string enclosed in double quotes (").

brace_term_position(From, To, Arg)
Term of the form {...}, as used in DCG rules. Arg describes the argument.

list_position(From, To, Elms, Tail)
A list. Elms describes the positions of the elements. If the list specifies the tail as | ⟨TailTerm⟩, Tail is unified with the term position of the tail, otherwise with the atom none.

term_position(From, To, FFrom, FTo, SubPos)
Used for a compound term not matching one of the above. FFrom and FTo describe the position of the functor. SubPos is a list, each element of which describes the term position of the corresponding subterm.

term_position(Pos)
Unifies Pos with the starting position of the term read. Pos is of the same format as used by stream_property/2.
**variables(Vars)**
Unify Vars with a list of variables in the term. The variables appear in the order they have been read. See also term_variables/2. (ISO).

**variable_names(Vars)**
Unify Vars with a list of ‘Name = Var’, where Name is an atom describing the variable name and Var is a variable that shares with the corresponding variable in Term. (ISO).

**read_term(+Stream, -Term, +Options)**
Read term with options from Stream. See read_term/2.

**read_history(+Show, +Help, +Special, +Prompt, -Term, -Bindings)**
Similar to read_term/2 using the option variable_names, but allows for history substitutions. read_history/6 is used by the top-level to read the user’s actions. Show is the command the user should type to show the saved events. Help is the command to get an overview of the capabilities. Special is a list of commands that are not saved in the history. Prompt is the first prompt given. Continuation prompts for more lines are determined by prompt/2. A %w in the prompt is substituted by the event number. See section 2.7 for available substitutions.

SWI-Prolog calls read_history/6 as follows:

```
read_history(h, '!h', [trace], '%w ?- ', Goal, Bindings)
```

**prompt(-Old, +New)**
Set prompt associated with read/1 and its derivatives. Old is first unified with the current prompt. On success the prompt will be set to New if this is an atom. Otherwise an error message is displayed. A prompt is printed if one of the read predicates is called and the cursor is at the left margin. It is also printed whenever a newline is given and the term has not been terminated. Prompts are only printed when the current input stream is user.

**prompt1(+Prompt)**
Sets the prompt for the next line to be read. Continuation lines will be read using the prompt defined by prompt/2.

### 4.20 Analysing and Constructing Terms

**functor(?Term, ?Name, ?Arity)**
True when Term is a term with functor Name/Arity. If Term is a variable it is unified with a new term whose arguments are all different variables (such a term is called a skeleton). If Term is atomic, Arity will be unified with the integer 0, and Name will be unified with Term. Raises instantiation_error if Term is unbound and Name/Arity is insufficiently instantiated.

**arg(?Arg, +Term, ?Value)**
Term should be instantiated to a term, Arg to an integer between 1 and the arity of Term. Value is unified with the Arg-th argument of Term. Arg may also be unbound. In this case
Value will be unified with the successive arguments of the term. On successful unification, \( \text{Arg} \) is unified with the argument number. Backtracking yields alternative solutions.\(^{42}\) The predicate \( \text{arg}/3 \) fails silently if \( \text{Arg} = 0 \) or \( \text{Arg} > \text{arity} \) and raises the exception \text{domain_error(not_less_than_zero, Arg)} \) if \( \text{Arg} < 0 \).

\[ ?- \text{Term} =.. ?\text{List} \]

\( \text {List} \) is a list whose head is the functor of \( \text {Term} \) and the remaining arguments are the arguments of the term. Either side of the predicate may be a variable, but not both. This predicate is called ’Univ’. Examples:

\[ ?- \text{foo}(\text{hello}, \text{X}) =.. \text{List}. \]
\[ \text{List} = [\text{foo}, \text{hello}, \text{X}] \]

\[ ?- \text{Term} =.. [\text{baz}, \text{foo}(1)] \]
\[ \text{Term} = \text{baz}(\text{foo}(1)) \]

\text{numbervars(+Term, +Start, -End)}

Unify the free variables of \( \text{Term} \) with a term \$VAR(N), where \( N \) is the number of the variable. Counting starts at \( \text{Start} \). \( \text{End} \) is unified with the number that should be given to the next variable. Example:

\[ ?- \text{numbervars}('\text{foo}(\text{A, B, A}), 0, \text{End}). \]
\[ \text{A} = ’\$VAR’(0), \]
\[ \text{B} = ’\$VAR’(1), \]
\[ \text{End} = 2. \]

See also the \text{numbervars} option to \text{write_term}/3 and \text{numbervars}/4.

\text{numbervars(+Term, +Start, -End, +Options)}

As \text{numbervars}/3, but providing the following options:

\text{functor_name(+Atom)}

Name of the functor to use instead of \$VAR.

\text{attvar(+Action)}

What to do if an attributed variable is encountered. Options are skip, which causes \text{numbervars}/3 to ignore the attributed variable, bind which causes it to thread it as a normal variable and assign the next ’$VAR’(N) term to it, or (default) error which raises a \text{type_error} exception.\(^{43}\)

\text{singleton(+Bool)}

If true (default false), \text{numbervars}/4 does singleton detection. Singleton variables

---

\(^{42}\)The instantiation pattern (-, +, ?) is an extension to ‘standard’ Prolog. Some systems provide \text{genarg}/3 that covers this pattern.

\(^{43}\)This behaviour was decided after a long discussion between David Reitter, Richard O’Keefe, Bart Demoen and Tom Schrijvers.
are unified with '\$VAR'('_')", causing them to be printed as _ by write_term/2 using the numbervars option. This option is exploited by portray_clause/2 and write_canonical/2.44

**var_number(@Term, -VarNumber)**

True if Term is numbered by numbervars/3 and VarNumber is the number given to this variable. This predicate avoids the need for unification with '\$VAR'(X) and opens the path for replacing this valid Prolog term by an internal representation that has no textual equivalent.

**term_variables(+Term, -List)**

Unify List with a list of variables, each sharing with a unique variable of Term.45 The variables in List are ordered in order of appearance traversing Term depth-first and left-to-right. See also term_variables/3. For example:

```prolog
?- term_variables(a(X, b(Y, X), Z), L).
L = [X, Y, Z].
```

**term_variables(+Term, -List, ?Tail)**

Difference list version of term_variables/2. That is, Tail is the tail of the variable list List.

**copy_term(+In, -Out)**

Create a version of In with renamed (fresh) variables and unify it to Out. Attributed variables (see section 6.1) have their attributes copied. The implementation of copy_term/2 can deal with infinite trees (cyclic terms). As pure Prolog cannot distinguish a ground term from another ground term with exactly the same structure, ground sub-terms are shared between In and Out. Sharing ground terms does affect setarg/3. SWI-Prolog provides duplicate_term/2 to create a true copy of a term.

### 4.20.1 Non-logical operations on terms

Prolog is not able to modify instantiated parts of a term. Lacking that capability makes the language much safer, but unfortunately there are problems that suffer severely in terms of time and/or memory usage. Always try hard to avoid the use of these primitives, but they can be a good alternative to using dynamic predicates. See also section 6.3, discussing the use of global variables.

**setarg(+Arg, +Term, +Value)**

Extra-logical predicate. Assigns the Arg-th argument of the compound term Term with the given Value. The assignment is undone if backtracking brings the state back into a position before the setarg/3 call. See also nb_setarg/3.

This predicate may be used for destructive assignment to terms, using them as an extra-logical storage bin. Always try hard to avoid the use of setarg/3 as it is not supported by many Prolog systems and one has to be very careful about unexpected copying as well as unexpected noncopying of terms. A good practice to improve somewhat on this situation is to make sure that

44BUG: Currently this option is ignored for cyclic terms.
45This predicate used to be called free_variables/2. The name term_variables/2 is more widely used. The old predicate is still available from the library backcomp.
terms whose arguments are subject to \texttt{setarg/3} have one unused and unshared variable in addition to the used arguments. This variable avoids unwanted sharing in, e.g., \texttt{copy_term/2}, and causes the term to be considered as non-ground.

\begin{verbatim}
:- meta_predicate
    succeeds_n_times(0, -).

succeeds_n_times(Goal, Times) :-
    Counter = counter(0),
    ( Goal,
        arg(1, Counter, N0),
        N is N0 + 1,
        nb_setarg(1, Counter, N),
        fail
    ;
    arg(1, Counter, Times)
).
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{nb_setarg(+Arg, +Term, +Value)}

Assigns the \texttt{Arg}-th argument of the compound term \texttt{Term} with the given \texttt{Value} as \texttt{setarg/3}, but on backtracking the assignment is not reversed. If \texttt{Value} is not atomic, it is duplicated using \texttt{duplicate_term/2}. This predicate uses the same technique as \texttt{nb_setval/2}. We therefore refer to the description of \texttt{nb_setval/2} for details on non-backtrackable assignment of terms. This predicate is compatible with GNU-Prolog \texttt{setarg(A,T,V,false)}, removing the type restriction on \texttt{Value}. See also \texttt{nb_linkarg/3}. Below is an example for counting the number of solutions of a goal. Note that this implementation is thread-safe, reentrant and capable of handling exceptions. Realising these features with a traditional implementation based on assert/retract or \texttt{flag/3} is much more complicated.

\texttt{nb_linkarg(+Arg, +Term, +Value)}

As \texttt{nb_setarg/3}, but like \texttt{nb_linkval/2} it does not duplicate \texttt{Value}. Use with extreme care and consult the documentation of \texttt{nb_linkval/2} before use.

\texttt{duplicate_term(+In, -Out)}

Version of \texttt{copy_term/2} that also copies ground terms and therefore ensures that destructive modification using \texttt{setarg/3} does not affect the copy. See also \texttt{nb_setval/2}, \texttt{nb_linkval/2}, \texttt{nb_setarg/3} and \texttt{nb_linkarg/3}.

\texttt{same_term(@T1, @T2)}  \hfill [semidet]

True if \texttt{T1} and \texttt{T2} are equivalent and will remain equivalent, even if \texttt{setarg/3} is used on either of them. This means \texttt{T1} and \texttt{T2} are the same variable, equivalent atomic data or a compound term allocated at the same address.

### 4.21 Analysing and Constructing Atoms

These predicates convert between Prolog constants and lists of character codes. The predicates \texttt{atom_codes/2}, \texttt{number_codes/2} and \texttt{name/2} behave the same when converting from a constant to a list of character codes. When converting the other way around, \texttt{atom_codes/2} will
generate an atom, number_codes/2 will generate a number or exception and name/2 will return a number if possible and an atom otherwise.

The ISO standard defines atom_chars/2 to describe the ‘broken-up’ atom as a list of one-character atoms instead of a list of codes. Up to version 3.2.x, SWI-Prolog’s atom_chars/2 behaved like atom_codes, compatible with Quintus and SICStus Prolog. As of 3.3.x, SWI-Prolog atom_codes/2 and atom_chars/2 are compliant to the ISO standard.

To ease the pain of all variations in the Prolog community, all SWI-Prolog predicates behave as flexible as possible. This implies the ‘list-side’ accepts either a code-list or a char-list and the ‘atom-side’ accepts all atomic types (atom, number and string).

**atom_codes(?Atom, ?String)**

Convert between an atom and a list of character codes. If Atom is instantiated, it will be translated into a list of character codes and the result is unified with String. If Atom is unbound and String is a list of character codes, Atom will be unified with an atom constructed from this list.

**atom_chars(?Atom, ?CharList)**

As atom_codes/2, but CharList is a list of one-character atoms rather than a list of character codes.\(^{46}\)

```prolog
?- atom_chars(hello, X).
X = [h, e, l, l, o]
```

**char_code(?Atom, ?Code)**

Convert between character and character code for a single character.\(^{47}\)

**number_chars(?Number, ?CharList)**

Similar to atom_chars/2, but converts between a number and its representation as a list of one-character atoms. Fails with a syntax_error if Number is unbound or CharList does not describe a number. Following the ISO standard, it allows for leading white space (including newlines) and does not allow for trailing white space.\(^{48}\)

**number_codes(?Number, ?CodeList)**

As number_chars/2, but converts to a list of character codes rather than one-character atoms. In the mode (-, +), both predicates behave identically to improve handling of non-ISO source.

**atom_number(?Atom, ?Number)**

Realises the popular combination of atom_codes/2 and number_codes/2 to convert between atom and number (integer or float) in one predicate, avoiding the intermediate list. Unlike the ISO number_codes/2 predicates, atom_number/2 fails silently in mode (+,-)

---

\(^{46}\)Up to version 3.2.x, atom_chars/2 behaved as the current atom_codes/2. The current definition is compliant with the ISO standard.

\(^{47}\)This is also called atom_char/2 in older versions of SWI-Prolog as well as some other Prolog implementations. The atom_char/2 predicate is available from the library backcomp.pl

\(^{48}\)ISO also allows for Prolog comments in leading white space. We—and most other implementations—believe this is incorrect. We also believe it would have been better not to allow for white space, or to allow for both leading and trailing white space. Prolog syntax-based conversion can be achieved using format/3 and read_from_chars/2.
if Atom does not represent a number. See also atomic_list_concat/2 for assembling an atom from atoms and numbers.

**name**(Atomic, CodeList)

CodeList is a list of character codes representing the same text as Atomic. Each of the arguments may be a variable, but not both. When CodeList describes an integer or floating point number and Atomic is a variable, Atomic will be unified with the numeric value described by CodeList (e.g., name(N, "300"), 400 is N + 100 succeeds). If CodeList is not a representation of a number, Atomic will be unified with the atom with the name given by the character code list. When Atomic is an atom or number, the unquoted print representation of it as a character code list will be unified with CodeList.

Note that it is not possible to produce the atom '300' using name/2, and that name(300, CodeList), name('300', CodeList) succeeds. For these reasons, new code should consider using the ISO predicates atom_codes/2 or number_codes/2. See also atom_number/2.

**term_to_atom**(Term, ?Atom)

True if Atom describes a term that unifies with Term. When Atom is instantiated, Atom is converted and then unified with Term. If Atom has no valid syntax, a syntax_error exception is raised. Otherwise Term is “written” on Atom using write_term/2 with the option quoted(true). See also format/3 and with_output_to/2.

**atom_to_term**(Atomic1, ?Term, -Bindings)

Use Atomic1 as input to read_term/2 using the option variable_names and return the read term in Term and the variable bindings in Bindings. Bindings is a list of Name = Var couples, thus providing access to the actual variable names. See also read_term/2. If Atom has no valid syntax, a syntax_error exception is raised.

**atomic_concat**(Atomic1, Atomic2, -Atom)

Atom represents the text after converting Atomic1 and Atomic2 to text and concatenating the result:

```prolog
?- atomic_concat(name, 42, X).
X = name42.
```

**atomic_list_concat**(List, -Atom)

List is a list of atoms, integers or floating point numbers. Succeeds if Atom can be unified with the concatenated elements of List.

49 Versions prior to 6.1.7 raise a syntax error, compliant to number_codes/2

50 Unfortunately, the ISO predicates provide no neat way to check that a string can be interpreted as a number. The most sensible way is to use catch/3 to catch the exception from number_codes/2; however, this is both slow and cumbersome. We consider making, e.g., number_codes(N, "abc") fail silently in future versions.
atomic_list_concat(+List, +Separator, ?Atom) [commons]
Creates an atom just like atomic_list_concat/2, but inserts Separator between each pair of atoms. For example:

?- atomic_list_concat([gnu, gnat], ',', A).
A = 'gnu, gnat'

The SWI-Prolog version of this predicate can also be used to split atoms by instantiating Separator and Atom as shown below. We kept this functionality to simplify porting old SWI-Prolog code where this predicate was called concat_atom/3.

?- atomic_list_concat(L, -, 'gnu-gnat').
L = [gnu, gnat]

atom_length(+Atom, -Length) [ISO]
True if Atom is an atom of Length characters. The SWI-Prolog version accepts all atomic types, as well as code-lists and character-lists. New code should avoid this feature and use write_length/3 to get the number of characters that would be written if the argument was handed to write_term/3.

atom_prefix(+Atom, +Prefix) [deprecated]
True if Atom starts with the characters from Prefix. Its behaviour is equivalent to
?- sub_atom(Atom, 0, _, _, Prefix). Deprecated.

ISO predicate for breaking atoms. It maintains the following relation: Sub is a sub-atom of Atom that starts at Before, has Len characters, and Atom contains After characters after the match.

?- sub_atom(abc, 1, 1, A, S).
A = 1, S = b

The implementation minimises non-determinism and creation of atoms. This is a very flexible predicate that can do search, prefix- and suffix-matching, etc.

4.22 Character properties

SWI-Prolog offers two comprehensive predicates for classifying characters and character codes. These predicates are defined as built-in predicates to exploit the C-character classification’s handling of locale (handling of local character sets). These predicates are fast, logical and deterministic if applicable.

In addition, there is the library ctype providing compatibility with some other Prolog systems. The predicates of this library are defined in terms of code_type/2.
char_type( Char, Type)
Tests or generates alternative Types or Chars. The character types are inspired by the standard C `<ctype.h>` primitives.

alnum
Char is a letter (upper- or lowercase) or digit.

alpha
Char is a letter (upper- or lowercase).

csym
Char is a letter (upper- or lowercase), digit or the underscore (_). These are valid C and Prolog symbol characters.

csymf
Char is a letter (upper- or lowercase) or the underscore (_). These are valid first characters for C and Prolog symbols.

ascii
Char is a 7-bit ASCII character (0..127).

white
Char is a space or tab, i.e. white space inside a line.

cntrl
Char is an ASCII control character (0..31).

digit
Char is a digit.

digit(Weight)
Char is a digit with value Weight. I.e. `char_type(X, digit(6)) yields X = '6'`. Useful for parsing numbers.

xdigit(Weight)
Char is a hexadecimal digit with value Weight. I.e. `char_type(a, xdigit(X)) yields X = '10'`. Useful for parsing numbers.

graph
Char produces a visible mark on a page when printed. Note that the space is not included!

lower
Char is a lowercase letter.

lower(Upper)
Char is a lowercase version of Upper. Only true if Char is lowercase and Upper uppercase.

to_lower(Upper)
Char is a lowercase version of Upper. For non-letters, or letter without case, Char and Lower are the same. See also `upcase_atom/2` and `downcase_atom/2`.

upper
Char is an uppercase letter.

upper(Lower)
Char is an uppercase version of Lower. Only true if Char is uppercase and Lower lowercase.
4.22. CHARACTER PROPERTIES

4.22.1 Case conversion

There is nothing in the Prolog standard for converting case in textual data. The SWI-Prolog predicates code_type/2 and char_type/2 can be used to test and convert individual characters. We have started some additional support:

\[ \text{downcase_atom}(\text{+AnyCase}, \text{-LowerCase}) \]

Converts the characters of \text{AnyCase} into lowercase as char_type/2 does (i.e. based on the defined locale if Prolog provides locale support on the hosting platform) and unifies the lowercase atom with \text{LowerCase}.

\[ \text{upcase_atom}(\text{+AnyCase}, \text{-UpperCase}) \]

Converts, similar to downcase_atom/2, an atom to uppercase.

4.22.2 White space normalization

\[ \text{normalize_space}(\text{-Out}, \text{+In}) \]

Normalize white space in \text{In}. All leading and trailing white space is removed. All non-empty sequences for Unicode white space characters are replaced by a single space (\u0020) character. \text{Out} uses the same conventions as with_output_to/2 and format/3.
4.22.3 Language-specific comparison

This section deals with predicates for language-specific string comparison operations.

`collation_key(+Atom, -Key)`
Create a `Key` from `Atom` for locale-specific comparison. The key is defined such that if the key of atom `A` precedes the key of atom `B` in the standard order of terms, `A` is alphabetically smaller than `B` using the sort order of the current locale.

The predicate `collation_key/2` is used by `locale_sort/2` from library(sort). Please examine the implementation of `locale_sort/2` as an example of using this call.

The `Key` is an implementation-defined and generally unreadable string. On systems that do not support locale handling, `Key` is simply unified with `Atom`.

`locale_sort(+List, -Sorted)`
Sort a list of atoms using the current locale. `List` is a list of atoms or string objects (see section 4.23). `Sorted` is unified with a list containing all atoms of `List`, sorted to the rules of the current locale. See also `collation_key/2` and `setlocale/3`.

4.23 Representing text in strings

SWI-Prolog supports the data type `string`. Strings are a time- and space-efficient mechanism to handle text in Prolog. Strings are stored as a byte array on the global (term) stack and are thus destroyed on backtracking and reclaimed by the garbage collector.

Strings were added to SWI-Prolog based on an early draft of the ISO standard, offering a mechanism to represent temporary character data efficiently. As SWI-Prolog strings can handle 0-bytes, they are frequently used through the foreign language interface (section 9) for storing arbitrary byte sequences.

Starting with version 3.3, SWI-Prolog offers garbage collection on the atom space as well as representing 0-bytes in atoms. Although strings and atoms still have different features, new code should consider using atoms to avoid too many representations for text as well as for compatibility with other Prolog implementations. Below are some of the differences:

- **creation**
  Creating strings is fast, as the data is simply copied to the global stack. Atoms are unique and therefore more expensive in terms of memory and time to create. On the other hand, if the same text has to be represented multiple times, atoms are more efficient.

- **destruction**
  Backtracking destroys strings at no cost. They are cheap to handle by the garbage collector, but it should be noted that extensive use of strings will cause many garbage collections. Atom garbage collection is generally faster.

String objects by default have no lexical representation and thus can only be created using the predicates below or through the foreign language interface (see chapter 9). There are two ways to make `read/1` read text into strings, both controlled through Prolog flags. One is by setting the `double_quotes` flag to `string`, and the other is by setting the `backquoted_string` flag to `true`. In the latter case, ’Hello world’ is read into a string and `write_term/2` prints strings between back-quotes if `quoted` is `true`. This flag provides compatibility with LPA Prolog string handling.
4.24. OPERATORS

string_to_atom(?String, ?Atom)
Logical conversion between a string and an atom. At least one of the two arguments must be instantiated. Atom can also be an integer or floating point number.

string_to_list(?String, ?List)
Logical conversion between a string and a list of character code characters. At least one of the two arguments must be instantiated.

string_length(+String, -Length)
Unify Length with the number of characters in String. This predicate is functionally equivalent to atom_length/2 and also accepts atoms, integers and floats as its first argument.

string_concat(?String1, ?String2, ?String3)
Similar to atom_concat/3, but the unbound argument will be unified with a string object rather than an atom. Also, if both String1 and String2 are unbound and String3 is bound to text, it breaks String3, unifying the start with String1 and the end with String2 as append does with lists. Note that this is not particularly fast on long strings, as for each redo the system has to create two entirely new strings, while the list equivalent only creates a single new list-cell and moves some pointers around.

sub_string(+String, ?Start, ?Length, ?After, ?Sub)
Sub is a substring of String starting at Start, with length Length, and String has After characters left after the match. See also sub_atom/5.

4.24 Operators

Operators are defined to improve the readability of source code. For example, without operators, to write 2*3+4*5 one would have to write +((*(2,3),(*(4,5))). In Prolog, a number of operators have been predefined. All operators, except for the comma (,) can be redefined by the user.

Some care has to be taken before defining new operators. Defining too many operators might make your source ‘natural’ looking, but at the same time make it hard to understand the limits of your syntax. To ease the pain, as of SWI-Prolog 3.3.0, operators are local to the module in which they are defined. Operators can be exported from modules using a term op(Precedence, Type, Name) in the export list as specified by module/2. This is an extension specific to SWI-Prolog and the recommended mechanism if portability is not an important concern.

The module table of the module user acts as default table for all modules and can be modified explicitly from inside a module to achieve compatibility with other Prolog systems:

```prolog
:- module(prove,
            [ prove/1
              ]).
:- op(900, xfx, user:((=>)).
```

Unlike what many users think, operators and quoted atoms have no relation: defining an atom as an operator does not influence parsing characters into atoms, and quoting an atom does not stop it from acting as an operator. To stop an atom acting as an operator, enclose it in parentheses like this: (myop).
\texttt{op(+Precedence, +Type, :Name)} \hspace{1cm} \text{[ISO]} \\
Declare \textit{Name} to be an operator of type \textit{Type} with precedence \textit{Precedence}. \textit{Name} can also be a list of names, in which case all elements of the list are declared to be identical operators. \textit{Precedence} is an integer between 0 and 1200. Precedence 0 removes the declaration. \textit{Type} is one of: \texttt{xf}, \texttt{yf}, \texttt{xfx}, \texttt{xyf}, \texttt{fy} or \texttt{fx}. The \texttt{f} indicates the position of the functor, while \texttt{x} and \texttt{y} indicate the position of the arguments. \texttt{y} should be interpreted as “on this position a term with precedence lower or equal to the precedence of the functor should occur”. For \texttt{x} the precedence of the argument must be strictly lower. The precedence of a term is 0, unless its principal functor is an operator, in which case the precedence is the precedence of this operator.

A term enclosed in parentheses (\ldots) has precedence 0.

The predefined operators are shown in table 4.2. Operators can be redefined, unless prohibited by one of the limitations below. Applications must be careful with (re-)defining operators because changing operators may cause (other) files to be interpreted differently. Often this will lead to a syntax error. In other cases, text is read silently into a different term which may lead to subtle and difficult to track errors.

- It is not allowed to redefine the comma (’,’).
- The bar (\texttt{|}) can only be (re-)defined as infix operator with priority not less than 1001.
- It is not allowed to define the empty list (\texttt{[]}) or the curly-bracket pair (\texttt{{}}) as operators.

In SWI-Prolog, operators are \textit{local} to a module (see also section 5.8). Keeping operators in modules and using controlled import/export of operators as described with the \texttt{module/2} directive keep the issues manageable. The module \texttt{system} provides the operators from table 4.2 and these operators cannot be modified. Files that are loaded from the SWI-Prolog directories resolve operators and predicates from this \texttt{system} module rather than \texttt{user}, which makes the semantics of the library and development system modules independent of operator changes to the \texttt{user} module.

\texttt{current_op(?Precedence, ?Type, ?:Name)} \hspace{1cm} \text{[ISO]} \\
True if \textit{Name} is currently defined as an operator of type \textit{Type} with precedence \textit{Precedence}. See also \texttt{op/3}.

\section*{4.25 Character Conversion}

Although I wouldn’t really know why you would like to use these features, they are provided for ISO compliance.

\texttt{char_conversion(+CharIn, +CharOut)} \hspace{1cm} \text{[ISO]} \\
Define that term input (see \texttt{read_term/3}) maps each character read as \textit{CharIn} to the character \textit{CharOut}. Character conversion is only executed if the Prolog flag \texttt{char_conversion} is set to \texttt{true} and not inside quoted atoms or strings. The initial table maps each character onto itself. See also \texttt{current_char_conversion/2}.

\texttt{current_char_conversion(?CharIn, ?CharOut)} \hspace{1cm} \text{[ISO]} \\
Queries the current character conversion table. See \texttt{char_conversion/2} for details.
4.26 Arithmetic

Arithmetic can be divided into some special purpose integer predicates and a series of general predicates for integer, floating point and rational arithmetic as appropriate. The general arithmetic predicates all handle expressions. An expression is either a simple number or a function. The arguments of a function are expressions. The functions are described in section 4.26.2.

4.26.1 Special purpose integer arithmetic

The predicates in this section provide more logical operations between integers. They are not covered by the ISO standard, although they are ‘part of the community’ and found as either library or built-in in many other Prolog systems.

**between(+Low, +High, ?Value)**

Low and High are integers, High ≥ Low. If Value is an integer, Low ≤ Value ≤ High. When Value is a variable it is successively bound to all integers between Low and High. If High is inf or infinite the between/3 is true iff Value ≥ Low, a feature that is particularly interesting for generating integers from a certain value.

**succ(?Int1, ?Int2)**

True if Int2 = Int1 + 1 and Int1 ≥ 0. At least one of the arguments must be instantiated to a natural number. This predicate raises the domain error not_less_than_zero if called with

---

Table 4.2: System operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1200</th>
<th>xf</th>
<th>--&gt;, :-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>:, ?-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1150</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>dynamic, discontiguous, initialization, meta_predicate, module_transparent, multifile, thread_local, volatile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>;,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>-&gt;, *-&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>fy</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900</td>
<td>fx</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>&lt;, =, =.., =@=, =:=, =&lt;, ==, ==, &gt;, &gt;=, @&lt;, @=&lt;, @&gt;, @&gt;=, @=, @=, is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>yfx</td>
<td>+, -, , /, xor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>fx</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>yfx</td>
<td>*, //, rdiv, &lt;&lt;, &gt;&gt;, mod, rem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>xf</td>
<td>~</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>fy</td>
<td>+, -, \</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

---

51We prefer infinite, but some other Prolog systems already use inf for infinity; we accept both for the time being.
a negative integer. E.g. \texttt{succ(X, 0)} fails silently and \texttt{succ(X, -1)} raises a domain error.\footnote{The behaviour to deal with natural numbers only was defined by Richard O’Keefe to support the common count-down-to-zero in a natural way. Up to 5.1.8, \texttt{succ/2} also accepted negative integers.}

\textbf{plus(?Int1, ?Int2, ?Int3)}

True if \texttt{Int3 = Int1 + Int2}. At least two of the three arguments must be instantiated to integers.

### 4.26.2 General purpose arithmetic

The general arithmetic predicates are optionally compiled (see \texttt{set_prolog_flag/2} and the \texttt{-O} command line option). Compiled arithmetic reduces global stack requirements and improves performance. Unfortunately compiled arithmetic cannot be traced, which is why it is optional.

\[ +\text{Expr1} > +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a larger number than \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ +\text{Expr1} < +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a smaller number than \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ +\text{Expr1} =< +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a smaller or equal number to \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ +\text{Expr1} >= +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a larger or equal number to \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ +\text{Expr1} =\text{\textbackslash=} +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a number non-equal to \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ +\text{Expr1} =:= +\text{Expr2} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True if expression \texttt{Expr1} evaluates to a number equal to \texttt{Expr2}.

\[ -\text{Number is } +\text{Expr} \quad \text{[ISO]} \]

True when \texttt{Number} is the value to which \texttt{Expr} evaluates. Typically, \texttt{is/2} should be used with unbound left operand. If equality is to be tested, \texttt{\textbackslash=}/2 should be used. For example:

\texttt{?- 1 is sin(pi/2).}  \quad \text{Fails! sin(pi/2) evaluates to the float 1.0, which does not unify with the integer 1.}

\texttt{?- 1 =:= sin(pi/2).}  \quad \text{Succeeds as expected.}

### Arithmetic types

SWI-Prolog defines the following numeric types:

- \texttt{integer}
  
  If SWI-Prolog is built using the \textit{GNU multiple precision arithmetic library} (GMP), integer arithmetic is \textit{unbounded}, which means that the size of integers is limited by available memory only. Without GMP, SWI-Prolog integers are 64-bits, regardless of the native integer size of the platform. The type of integer support can be detected using the Prolog flags \texttt{bounded}, \texttt{min_integer} and \texttt{max_integer}. As the use of GMP is default, most of the following descriptions assume unbounded integer arithmetic.
4.26. ARITHMETIC

Internally, SWI-Prolog has three integer representations. Small integers (defined by the Prolog flag `max_tagged_integer`) are encoded directly. Larger integers are represented as 64-bit values on the global stack. Integers that do not fit in 64 bits are represented as serialised GNU MPZ structures on the global stack.

- **rational number**
  Rational numbers \( \mathbb{Q} \) are quotients of two integers. Rational arithmetic is only provided if GMP is used (see above). Rational numbers are currently not supported by a Prolog type. They are represented by the compound term `rdiv(N,M)`. Rational numbers that are returned from `is/2` are canonical, which means \( M \) is positive and \( N \) and \( M \) have no common divisors. Rational numbers are introduced in the computation using the `rational/1`, `rationalize/1` or the `rdiv/2` (rational division) function. Using the same functor for rational division and for representing rational numbers allows for passing rational numbers between computations as well as for using `format/3` for printing.

In the long term, it is likely that rational numbers will become atomic as well as a subtype of `number`. User code that creates or inspects the `rdiv(M,N)` terms will not be portable to future versions. Rationals are created using one of the functions mentioned above and inspected using `rational/3`.

- **float**
  Floating point numbers are represented using the C type `double`. On most of today’s platforms these are 64-bit IEEE floating point numbers.

  Arithmetic functions that require integer arguments accept, in addition to integers, rational numbers with (canonical) denominator ‘1’. If the required argument is a float the argument is converted to float. Note that conversion of integers to floating point numbers may raise an overflow exception. In all other cases, arguments are converted to the same type using the order below.

  integer → rational number → floating point number

**Rational number examples**

The use of rational numbers with unbounded integers allows for exact integer or fixed point arithmetic under addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. To exploit rational arithmetic `rdiv/2` should be used instead of ‘/’ and floating point numbers must be converted to rational using `rational/1`. Omitting the `rational/1` on floats will convert a rational operand to float and continue the arithmetic using floating point numbers. Here are some examples.

\[
\begin{align*}
A \text{ is } 2 \text{ rdiv } 6 & \quad A = 1 \text{ rdiv } 3 \\
A \text{ is } 4 \text{ rdiv } 3 + 1 & \quad A = 7 \text{ rdiv } 3 \\
A \text{ is } 4 \text{ rdiv } 3 + 1.5 & \quad A = 2.83333 \\
A \text{ is } 4 \text{ rdiv } 3 + \text{ rational}(1.5) & \quad A = 17 \text{ rdiv } 6
\end{align*}
\]

Note that floats cannot represent all decimal numbers exactly. The function `rational/1` creates an exact equivalent of the float, while `rationalize/1` creates a rational number that is within the float rounding error from the original float. Please check the documentation of these functions for details and examples.

Rational numbers can be printed as decimal numbers with arbitrary precision using the `format/3` floating point conversion:
?- A is 4 rdiv 3 + rational(1.5), format('˜50f˜n', [A]).
2.83333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333
A = 17 rdiv 6

Arithmetic Functions

Arithmetic functions are terms which are evaluated by the arithmetic predicates described in section 4.26.2. There are four types of arguments to functions:

- \( \text{Expr} \) Arbitrary expression, returning either a floating point value or an integer.
- \( \text{IntExpr} \) Arbitrary expression that must evaluate to an integer.
- \( \text{RatExpr} \) Arbitrary expression that must evaluate to a rational number.
- \( \text{FloatExpr} \) Arbitrary expression that must evaluate to a floating point.

For systems using bounded integer arithmetic (default is unbounded, see section 4.26.2 for details), integer operations that would cause overflow automatically convert to floating point arithmetic.

\[
\begin{align*}
-\ +\text{Expr} & : \text{Result} = -\text{Expr} & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\ +\text{Expr} & : \text{Result} = \text{Expr}. \text{ Note that if } + \text{ is followed by a number, the parser discards the +. I.e. } \text{?- integer(+1)} \text{ succeeds.} & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\text{Expr1} + \ +\text{Expr2} & : \text{Result} = \text{Expr1} + \text{Expr2} & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\text{Expr1} - \ +\text{Expr2} & : \text{Result} = \text{Expr1} - \text{Expr2} & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\text{Expr1} * \ +\text{Expr2} & : \text{Result} = \text{Expr1} * \text{Expr2} & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\text{Expr1} / \ +\text{Expr2} & : \text{Result} = \frac{\text{Expr1}}{\text{Expr2}}. \text{ If the flag iso is true, both arguments are converted to float and the return value is a float. Otherwise (default), if both arguments are integers the operation returns an integer if the division is exact. If at least one of the arguments is rational and the other argument is integer, the operation returns a rational number. In all other cases the return value is a float. See also } / / 2 \text{ and } \text{rdiv}/2. & \text{[ISO]} \\
+\text{IntExpr1} \mod +\text{IntExpr2} & : \text{Modulo, defined as } \text{Result} = \text{IntExpr1} - (\text{IntExpr1} \text{ div} \text{IntExpr2}) \times \text{IntExpr2}, \text{ where } \text{div} \text{ is floored division.} & \text{[ISO]}
\end{align*}
\]
4.26. ARITHMETIC

+IntExpr1 rem +IntExpr2

   Remainder of integer division. Behaves as if defined by
   Result is IntExpr1 - (IntExpr1 // IntExpr2) \times IntExpr2

+IntExpr1 // +IntExpr2

   Integer division, defined as Result is \textit{rnd}_{1}(Expr1/Expr2). The function \textit{rnd}_{1} is the
   default rounding used by the C compiler and available through the Prolog flag
   \text{integer_rounding_function}. In the C99 standard, C-rounding is defined as
   \text{towards\_zero}.\footnote{Future versions might guarantee rounding towards zero.}

\textbf{div}(+IntExpr1, +IntExpr2)

   Integer division, defined as Result is \textit{IntExpr1} - \textit{IntExpr1 mod IntExpr2} // \textit{IntExpr2}. In other
   words, this is integer division that rounds towards -infinity. This function guarantees behaviour
   that is consistent with \textit{mod}/2, i.e., the following holds for every pair of integers \(X, Y\) where
   \(Y =\neq 0\).

   \[
   \begin{align*}
   Q & \text{ is } \text{div}(X, Y), \\
   M & \text{ is } \text{mod}(X, Y), \\
   X & =:= Y \times Q + M.
   \end{align*}
   \]

+RatExpr rdiv +RatExpr

   Rational number division. This function is only available if SWI-Prolog has been compiled
   with rational number support. See section 4.26.2 for details.

+IntExpr1 gcd +IntExpr2

   Result is the greatest common divisor of \textit{IntExpr1}, \textit{IntExpr2}.

abs(+Expr)

   Evaluate \textit{Expr} and return the absolute value of it.

sign(+Expr)

   Evaluate to -1 if \textit{Expr} < 0, 1 if \textit{Expr} > 0 and 0 if \textit{Expr} = 0. If \textit{Expr} evaluates to a float, the
   return value is a float (e.g., -1.0, 0.0 or 1.0). In particular, note that \text{sign}(-0.0) evaluates to 0.0. See also \text{copysign}/1

\textbf{copysign}(+Expr1, +Expr2)

   Evaluate to \textit{X}, where the absolute value of \textit{X} equals the absolute value of \textit{Expr1} and the sign of
   \textit{X} matches the sign of \textit{Expr2}. This function is based on \text{copysign()} from C99, which works on
   double precision floats and deals with handling the sign of special floating point values such as
   -0.0. Our implementation follows C99 if both arguments are floats. Otherwise, \text{copysign}/1
   evaluates to \textit{Expr1} if the sign of both expressions matches or -\textit{Expr1} if the signs do not match. Here, we use the extended notion of signs for floating point numbers, where the sign of -0.0
   and other special floats is negative.

max(+Expr1, +Expr2)

   Evaluate to the larger of \textit{Expr1} and \textit{Expr2}. Both arguments are compared after converting to
   the same type, but the return value is in the original type. For example, \text{max}(2.5, 3) compares
   the two values after converting to float, but returns the integer 3.
\textbf{min(+Expr1, +Expr2) \hspace{1cm} [ISO]}

Evaluate to the smaller of \texttt{Expr1} and \texttt{Expr2}. See \texttt{max/2} for a description of type handling.

\textbf{.(+Int, [])}

A list of one element evaluates to the element. This implies "a" evaluates to the character code of the letter ‘a’ (97). This option is available for compatibility only. It will not work if style_check(+string) is active, as "a" will then be transformed into a string object. The recommended way to specify the character code of the letter ‘a’ is 0'a.

\textbf{random(+IntExpr)}

Evaluate to a random integer \( i \) for which \( 0 \leq i < \text{IntExpr} \). The system has two implementations. If it is compiled with support for unbounded arithmetic (default) it uses the GMP library random functions. In this case, each thread keeps its own random state. The default algorithm is the \textit{Mersenne Twister} algorithm. The seed is set when the first random number in a thread is generated. If available, it is set from /dev/random. Otherwise it is set from the system clock. If unbounded arithmetic is not supported, random numbers are shared between threads and the seed is initialised from the clock when SWI-Prolog was started. The predicate \texttt{set_random/1} can be used to control the random number generator.

\textbf{random\_float}

Evaluate to a random float \( I \) for which \( 0.0 < i < 1.0 \). This function shares the random state with \texttt{random/1}. All remarks with the function \texttt{random/1} also apply for \texttt{random\_float/0}. Note that both sides of the domain are open. This avoids evaluation errors on, e.g., \texttt{log/1} or \texttt{//2} while no practical application can expect 0.0.\(^{54}\)

\textbf{round(+Expr) \hspace{1cm} [ISO]}

Evaluate \texttt{Expr} and round the result to the nearest integer.

\textbf{integer(+Expr)}

Same as \texttt{round/1} (backward compatibility).

\textbf{float(+Expr) \hspace{1cm} [ISO]}

Translate the result to a floating point number. Normally, Prolog will use integers whenever possible. When used around the 2nd argument of \texttt{is/2}, the result will be returned as a floating point number. In other contexts, the operation has no effect.

\textbf{rational(+Expr)}

Convert the \texttt{Expr} to a rational number or integer. The function returns the input on integers and rational numbers. For floating point numbers, the returned rational number \textit{exactly} represents the float. As floats cannot exactly represent all decimal numbers the results may be surprising. In the examples below, doubles can represent 0.25 and the result is as expected, in contrast to the result of \texttt{rational(0.1)}. The function \texttt{rationalize/1} remedies this. See section 4.26.2 for more information on rational number support.

\begin{verbatim}
?- A is rational(0.25).
\end{verbatim}

\(^{54}\)Richard O’Keefe said: “If you \textit{are} generating IEEE doubles with the claimed uniformity, then 0 has a 1 in \(2^{53} = 1\text{in}0, 007, 199, 254, 740, 992\) chance of turning up. No program that expects [0.0,1.0) is going to be surprised when 0.0 fails to turn up in a few millions of millions of trials, now is it? But a program that expects (0.0,1.0) could be devastated if 0.0 did turn up.”
A is 1 rdiv 4
?- A is rational(0.1).
A = 3602879701896397 rdiv 36028797018963968

\textbf{rationalize(+Expr)}

Convert the \textit{Expr} to a rational number or integer. The function is similar to \texttt{rational/1}, but the result is only accurate within the rounding error of floating point numbers, generally producing a much smaller denominator.\footnote{The names \texttt{rational/1} and \texttt{rationalize/1} as well as their semantics are inspired by Common Lisp.}

?- A is rationalize(0.25).
A = 1 rdiv 4
?- A is rationalize(0.1).
A = 1 rdiv 10

\textbf{float_fractional_part(+Expr)} \text{[ISO]}

Fractional part of a floating point number. Negative if \textit{Expr} is negative, rational if \textit{Expr} is rational and 0 if \textit{Expr} is integer. The following relation is always true: $X \text{is float_fractional_part}(X) + \text{float_integer_part}(X)$.

\textbf{float_integer_part(+Expr)} \text{[ISO]}

Integer part of floating point number. Negative if \textit{Expr} is negative, \textit{Expr} if \textit{Expr} is integer.

\textbf{truncate(+Expr)} \text{[ISO]}

Truncate \textit{Expr} to an integer. If \textit{Expr} $\geq 0$ this is the same as \texttt{floor(Expr)}. For \textit{Expr} $< 0$ this is the same as \texttt{ceil(Expr)}. That is, \texttt{truncate/1} rounds towards zero.

\textbf{floor(+Expr)} \text{[ISO]}

Evaluate \textit{Expr} and return the largest integer smaller or equal to the result of the evaluation.

\textbf{ceiling(+Expr)} \text{[ISO]}

Evaluate \textit{Expr} and return the smallest integer larger or equal to the result of the evaluation.

\textbf{ceil(+Expr)}

Same as \texttt{ceiling/1} (backward compatibility).

\textbf{+IntExpr1 >> +IntExpr2} \text{[ISO]}

Bitwise shift \textit{IntExpr1} by \textit{IntExpr2} bits to the right. The operation performs arithmetic shift, which implies that the inserted most significant bits are copies of the original most significant bits.

\textbf{+IntExpr1 << +IntExpr2} \text{[ISO]}

Bitwise shift \textit{IntExpr1} by \textit{IntExpr2} bits to the left.

\textbf{+IntExpr1 \textbackslash/ +IntExpr2} \text{[ISO]}

Bitwise ‘or’ \textit{IntExpr1} and \textit{IntExpr2}.
\[ +\text{IntExpr1} \setminus +\text{IntExpr2} \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Bitwise ‘and’ \text{IntExpr1} and \text{IntExpr2}.

\[ +\text{IntExpr1} \text{ xor} +\text{IntExpr2} \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Bitwise ‘exclusive or’ \text{IntExpr1} and \text{IntExpr2}.

\[ \setminus +\text{IntExpr} \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Bitwise negation. The returned value is the one’s complement of \text{IntExpr}.

\[ \sqrt{+\text{Expr}} \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \sqrt{\text{Expr}}

\[ \sin(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \sin \text{Expr}. \text{Expr} is the angle in radians.

\[ \cos(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \cos \text{Expr}. \text{Expr} is the angle in radians.

\[ \tan(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \tan \text{Expr}. \text{Expr} is the angle in radians.

\[ \text{asin}(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \arcsin \text{Expr}. Result is the angle in radians.

\[ \text{acos}(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \arccos \text{Expr}. Result is the angle in radians.

\[ \text{atan}(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \arctan \text{Expr}. Result is the angle in radians.

\[ \text{atan2}(+\text{YExpr}, +\text{XExpr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \arctan \frac{\text{YExpr}}{\text{XExpr}}. Result is the angle in radians. The return value is in the range \([-\pi \ldots \pi]\). Used to convert between rectangular and polar coordinate system.

\[ \text{atan}(+\text{YExpr}, +\text{XExpr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Same as \text{atan2}/2 (backward compatibility).

\[ \log(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Natural logarithm. Result = \ln \text{Expr}

\[ \log_{10}(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Base-10 logarithm. Result = \log \text{Expr}

\[ \exp(+\text{Expr}) \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = e^{\text{Expr}}

\[ +\text{Expr1} \star\star +\text{Expr2} \quad [\text{ISO}] \]

Result = \text{Expr1}^{\text{Expr2}}. With unbounded integers and integer values for \text{Expr1} and a non-negative integer \text{Expr2}, the result is always integer. The integer expressions 0^I, 1^I and \(-1^I\) are guaranteed to work for any integer \(I\). Other integer base values generate a resource error if the result does not fit in memory.
4.27. MISC ARITHMETIC SUPPORT PREDICATES

powm(+IntExprBase, +IntExprExp, +IntExprMod)
Result = (IntExprBase ^ IntExprExp) modulo IntExprMod. Only available when compiled with unbounded integer support. This formula is required for Diffie-Hellman key-exchange, a technique where two parties can establish a secret key over a public network.

Expr1 ^ Expr2
Same as */2 (backward compatibility).

pi
Evaluate to the mathematical constant π (3.14159\ldots).

e
Evaluate to the mathematical constant e (2.71828\ldots).

epsilon
Evaluate to the difference between the float 1.0 and the first larger floating point number.

cputime
Evaluate to a floating point number expressing the CPU time (in seconds) used by Prolog up till now. See also statistics/2 and time/1.

eval(+Expr)
Evaluate Expr. Although ISO standard dictates that ‘A=1+2, B is A’ works and unifies B to 3, it is widely felt that source level variables in arithmetic expressions should have been limited to numbers. In this view the eval function can be used to evaluate arbitrary expressions.\(^\text{56}\)

56The eval/1 function was first introduced by ECLiPSe and is under consideration for YAP.

Bitvector functions The functions below are not covered by the standard. The msb/1 function is compatible with hProlog. The others are private extensions that improve handling of —unbounded— integers as bit-vectors.

msb(+IntExpr)
Return the largest integer N such that (IntExpr >> N) \&\& 1 == 1. This is the (zero-origin) index of the most significant 1 bit in the value of IntExpr, which must evaluate to a positive integer. Errors for 0, negative integers, and non-integers.

lsb(+IntExpr)
Return the smallest integer N such that (IntExpr >> N) \&\& 1 == 1. This is the (zero-origin) index of the least significant 1 bit in the value of IntExpr, which must evaluate to a positive integer. Errors for 0, negative integers, and non-integers.

popcount(+IntExpr)
Return the number of 1s in the binary representation of the non-negative integer IntExpr.

4.27 Misc arithmetic support predicates

set_random(+Option)
Controls the random number generator accessible through the functions random/1 and random_float/0. Note that the library random provides an alternative API to the same random primitives.
seed(+Seed)
Set the seed of the random generator for this thread. Seed is an integer or the atom random. If random, repeat the initialization procedure described with the function random/1. Here is an example:

?- set_random(seed(111)), A is random(6).
A = 5.
?- set_random(seed(111)), A is random(6).
A = 5.

state(+State)
Set the generator to a state fetched using the state property of random_property/1. Using other values may lead to undefined behaviour.57

random_property(?Option)
True when Option is a current property of the random generator. Currently, this predicate provides access to the state. This predicate is not present on systems where the state is inaccessible.

state(-State)
Describes the current state of the random generator. State is a normal Prolog term that can be asserted or written to a file. Applications should make no other assumptions about its representation. The only meaningful operation is to use as argument to set_random/1 using the state(State) option.58

current_arithmetic_function(?Head)
True when Head is an evaluable function. For example:

?- current_arithmetic_function(sin(_)).
true.

4.28 Built-in list operations

Most list operations are defined in the library lists described in section A.12. Some that are implemented with more low-level primitives are built-in and described here.

is_list(+Term)
True if Term is bound to the empty list ([]) or a term with functor ‘.’ and arity 2 and the second argument is a list.59 This predicate acts as if defined by the definition below on acyclic terms. The implementation fails safely if Term represents a cyclic list.

57The limitations of the underlying (GMP) library are unknown, which makes it impossible to validate the State.
58BUG: GMP provides no portable mechanism to fetch and restore the state. The current implementation works, but the state depends on the platform. I.e., it is generally not possible to reuse the state with another version of GMP or on a CPU with different datasizes or endian-ness.
59In versions before 5.0.1, is_list/1 just checked for [] or [_]. and proper_list/1 had the role of the current is_list/1. The current definition conforms to the de facto standard. Assuming proper coding standards, there should only be very few cases where a quick-and-dirty is_list/1 is a good choice. Richard O’Keefe pointed at this issue.
4.28. BUILT-IN LIST OPERATIONS

is_list(X) :-
    var(X), !,
    fail.
is_list([]).
is_list([_|T]) :-
    is_list(T).

memberchk(?Elem, +List)
Same as once(member(Elem, List)). See member/2.

length(?List, ?Int)
True if Int represents the number of elements in List. This predicate is a true relation and can be used to find the length of a list or produce a list (holding variables) of length Int. The predicate is non-deterministic, producing lists of increasing length if List is a partial list and Int is unbound. It raises errors if List is not a list or partial list or Int is not an integer or unbound.

sort(+List, -Sorted) [ISO]
True if Sorted can be unified with a list holding the elements of List, sorted to the standard order of terms (see section 4.7). Duplicates are removed. The implementation is in C, using natural merge sort.50 The sort/2 predicate can sort a cyclic list, returning a non-cyclic version with the same elements.

msort(+List, -Sorted)
Equivalent to sort/2, but does not remove duplicates. Raises a type_error if List is a cyclic list or not a list.

keysort(+List, -Sorted) [ISO]
List is a proper list whose elements are Key–Value, that is, terms whose principal functor is (-)/2, whose first argument is the sorting key, and whose second argument is the satellite data to be carried along with the key. keysort/2 sorts List like msort/2, but only compares the keys. It is used to sort terms not on standard order, but on any criterion that can be expressed on a multi-dimensional scale. Sorting on more than one criterion can be done using terms as keys, putting the first criterion as argument 1, the second as argument 2, etc. The order of multiple elements that have the same Key is not changed. The implementation is in C, using natural merge sort. Fails with a type_error if List is a cyclic list or not a list, or one of the elements of List is not a pair.

predsort(+Pred, +List, -Sorted)
Sorts similar to sort/2, but determines the order of two terms by calling Pred(-Delta, +E1, +E2). This call must unify Delta with one of , or =. If the built-in predicate compare/3 is used, the result is the same as sort/2. See also keysort/2.61

50Contributed by Richard O’Keefe.
61Please note that the semantics have changed between 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.
4.29 Finding all Solutions to a Goal

\texttt{findall(+Template, :Goal, -Bag)}

Create a list of the instantiations Template gets successively on backtracking over Goal and unify the result with Bag. Succeeds with an empty list if Goal has no solutions. findall/3 is equivalent to bagof/3 with all free variables bound with the existential operator \( ^\)\), except that bagof/3 fails when Goal has no solutions.

\texttt{findall(+Template, :Goal, -Bag, +Tail)}

As findall/3, but returns the result as the difference list Bag-Tail. The 3-argument version is defined as

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{findall}(\text{Templ}, \text{Goal}, \text{Bag}) & : - \\
\text{findall}(\text{Templ}, \text{Goal}, \text{Bag}, []) \\
\end{aligned}
\]

\texttt{bagof(+Template, :Goal, -Bag)}

Unify Bag with the alternatives of Template. If Goal has free variables besides the one sharing with Template, bagof/3 will backtrack over the alternatives of these free variables, unifying Bag with the corresponding alternatives of Template. The construct +Var^Goal tells bagof/3 not to bind Var in Goal. bagof/3 fails if Goal has no solutions.

The example below illustrates bagof/3 and the ^ operator. The variable bindings are printed together on one line to save paper.

\[
\begin{aligned}
2 & ?- \text{listing}(\text{foo}). \\
& \text{foo}(a, b, c). \\
& \text{foo}(a, b, d). \\
& \text{foo}(b, c, e). \\
& \text{foo}(b, c, f). \\
& \text{foo}(c, c, g). \\
& \text{true}. \\
3 & ?- \text{bagof}(C, \text{foo}(A, B, C), Cs). \\
& A = a, B = b, C = G308, Cs = [c, d] ; \\
& A = b, B = c, C = G308, Cs = [e, f] ; \\
& A = c, B = c, C = G308, Cs = [g]. \\
4 & ?- \text{bagof}(C, A^\text{foo}(A, B, C), Cs). \\
& A = G324, B = b, C = G326, Cs = [c, d] ; \\
& A = G324, B = c, C = G326, Cs = [e, f, g]. \\
5 & ?- \\
\end{aligned}
\]

\texttt{setof(+Template, +Goal, -Set)}

Equivalent to bagof/3, but sorts the result using sort/2 to get a sorted list of alternatives without duplicates.
4.30 Forall

forall(:Cond, :Action) [semidet]
For all alternative bindings of Cond, Action can be proven. The example verifies that all arithmetic statements in the given list are correct. It does not say which is wrong if one proves wrong.

?- forall(member(Result = Formula, [2 = 1 + 1, 4 = 2 * 2]), Result =:= Formula).

The predicate forall/2 is implemented as \+ ( Cond, \+ Action), i.e., There is no instantiation of Cond for which Action is false.. The use of double negation implies that forall/2 does not change any variable bindings. It proves a relation. The forall/2 control structure can be used for its side-effects. E.g., the following asserts relations in a list into the dynamic database:

?- forall(member(Child-Parent), ChildPairs), assertz(child_of(Child, Parent))).

Using forall/2 as forall(Generator, SideEffect) is preferred over the classical failure driven loop as shown below because it makes it explicit which part of the construct is the generator and which part creates the side effects. Also, unexpected failure of the side effect causes the construct to fail. Failure makes it evident that there is an issue with the code, while a failure driven loop would succeed with an erroneous result.

...,
( Generator,
  SideEffect,
  fail
;  true
)

If your indent is to create variable bindings, the forall/2 control structure is inadequate. Possibly you are looking for maplist/2, findall/3 or foreach/2.

4.31 Formatted Write

The current version of SWI-Prolog provides two formatted write predicates. The first is writef/[1,2], which is compatible with Edinburgh C-Prolog. The second is format/[1,2], which is compatible with Quintus Prolog. We hope the Prolog community will once define a standard formatted write predicate. If you want performance use format/[1,2], as this predicate is defined in C. Otherwise compatibility reasons might tell you which predicate to use.
4.31.1  Writef

\texttt{writeln(+Term)}

Equivalent to \texttt{write(Term), \nl.}

\texttt{writef(+Atom)}

Equivalent to \texttt{writef(Atom, []).}

\texttt{writef(+Format, +Arguments)}

Formatted write. \textit{Format} is an atom whose characters will be printed. \textit{Format} may contain certain special character sequences which specify certain formatting and substitution actions. \textit{Arguments} then provides all the terms required to be output.

Escape sequences to generate a single special character:

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\texttt{\n} & Output a newline character (see also \texttt{nl/[0,1]}) \\
\texttt{\l} & Output a line separator (same as \texttt{\n}) \\
\texttt{\r} & Output a carriage return character (ASCII 13) \\
\texttt{\t} & Output the ASCII character TAB (9) \\
\texttt{\ } & The character \texttt{\ } is output \\
\texttt{\%} & The character \% is output \\
\texttt{\nnn} & where \texttt{(nnn)} is an integer (1-3 digits); the character with code \texttt{(nnn)} is output (NB: \texttt{(nnn)} is read as \textit{decimal}) \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

Note that \texttt{\l, \nnn} and \texttt{\ } are interpreted differently when character escapes are in effect. See section 2.15.1.

Escape sequences to include arguments from \textit{Arguments}. Each time a \% escape sequence is found in \textit{Format} the next argument from \textit{Arguments} is formatted according to the specification.

\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
\texttt{\%t} & print/1 the next item (mnemonic: term) \\
\texttt{\%w} & write/1 the next item \\
\texttt{\%q} & writeq/1 the next item \\
\texttt{\%d} & Write the term, ignoring operators. See also write_term/2. Mnemonic: old Edinburgh display/1 \\
\texttt{\%p} & print/1 the next item (identical to \texttt{\%t}) \\
\texttt{\%n} & Put the next item as a character (i.e., it is a character code) \\
\texttt{\%r} & Write the next item N times where N is the second item (an integer) \\
\texttt{\%s} & Write the next item as a String (so it must be a list of characters) \\
\texttt{\%f} & Perform a ttyflush/0 (no items used) \\
\texttt{\%Nc} & Write the next item Centered in N columns \\
\texttt{\%Nl} & Write the next item Left justified in N columns \\
\texttt{\%Nr} & Write the next item Right justified in N columns. N is a decimal number with at least one digit. The item must be an atom, integer, float or string. \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
4.31. FORMATTED WRITE

swritef(-String, +Format, +Arguments)
Equivalent to writef/2, but “writes” the result on String instead of the current output stream.
Example:

?- swritef(S, '%15L%w', [’Hello’, ’World’]).
S = "Hello          World"

swritef(-String, +Format)
Equivalent to swritef(String, Format, []).

4.31.2 Format
The format family of predicates is the most versatile and portable way to produce textual output.

format(+Format)
Defined as ‘format(Format) :- format(Format, []).’

format(+Format, :Arguments)
Format is an atom, list of character codes, or a Prolog string. Arguments provides the arguments required by the format specification. If only one argument is required and this single argument is not a list, the argument need not be put in a list. Otherwise the arguments are put in a list.

Special sequences start with the tilde (~), followed by an optional numeric argument, followed by a character describing the action to be undertaken. A numeric argument is either a sequence of digits, representing a positive decimal number, a sequence \langle\text{character}\rangle, representing the character code value of the character (only useful for ~t) or a asterisk (*), in which case the numeric argument is taken from the next argument of the argument list, which should be a positive integer. E.g., the following three examples all pass 46 (.) to ~t:

?- format('˜w ˜46t ˜w72|˜n', [’Title’, ’Page’]).
?- format('˜w ˜'.t ˜w72|˜n', [’Title’, ’Page’]).
?- format('˜w ˜*t ˜w72|˜n', [’Title’, 46, ’Page’]).

Numeric conversion (d, D, e, E, f, g and G) accept an arithmetic expression as argument. This is introduced to handle rational numbers transparently (see section 4.26.2). The floating point conversions allow for unlimited precision for printing rational numbers in decimal form. E.g., the following will write as many 3’s as you want by changing the ‘70’.

?- format('˜50f', [10 rdiv 3]).
3.333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333333

~ Output the tilde itself.

a Output the next argument, which must be an atom. This option is equivalent to w, except that it requires the argument to be an atom.

62 Unfortunately not covered by any standard.
Interpret the next argument as a character code and add it to the output. This argument must be a valid Unicode character code. Note that the actually emitted bytes are defined by the character encoding of the output stream and an exception may be raised if the output stream is not capable of representing the requested Unicode character. See section 2.18.1 for details.

Output next argument as a decimal number. It should be an integer. If a numeric argument is specified, a dot is inserted argument positions from the right (useful for doing fixed point arithmetic with integers, such as handling amounts of money).

Same as d, but makes large values easier to read by inserting a comma every three digits left or right of the dot.

Output next argument as a floating point number in exponential notation. The numeric argument specifies the precision. Default is 6 digits. Exact representation depends on the C library function printf(). This function is invoked with the format %.precision)e.

Equivalent to e, but outputs a capital E to indicate the exponent.

Floating point in non-exponential notation. See C library function printf().

Floating point in e or f notation, whichever is shorter.

Floating point in E or f notation, whichever is shorter.

Ignore next argument of the argument list. Produces no output.

Give the next argument to write_canonical/1.

Output a newline character.

Only output a newline if the last character output on this stream was not a newline. Not properly implemented yet.

Give the next argument to print/1.

Give the next argument to writeq/1.

Print integer in radix numeric argument notation. Thus 16r prints its argument hexadecimal. The argument should be in the range [2,...,36]. Lowercase letters are used for digits above 9.

Same as r, but uses uppercase letters for digits above 9.

Output text from a list of character codes or a string (see string/1 and section 4.23) from the next argument.\[63\]

Interpret the next argument as a goal and execute it. Output written to the current_output stream is inserted at this place. Goal is called in the module calling format/3. This option is not present in the original definition by Quintus, but supported by some other Prolog systems.

All remaining space between 2 tab stops is distributed equally over statements between the tab stops. This space is padded with spaces by default. If an argument is supplied, it is taken to be the character code of the character used for padding. This can be used to do left or right alignment, centering, distributing, etc. See also ~| and ~+ to set tab stops. A tab stop is assumed at the start of each line.

\[63\]The s modifier also accepts an atom for compatibility. This is deprecated due to the ambiguity of [].
Set a tab stop on the current position. If an argument is supplied set a tab stop on the position of that argument. This will cause all \texttt{\textasciitilde t}'s to be distributed between the previous and this tab stop.

+ Set a tab stop (as \texttt{\textasciitilde !}) relative to the last tab stop or the beginning of the line if no tab stops are set before the \texttt{\textasciitilde +}. This constructs can be used to fill fields. The partial format sequence below prints an integer right-aligned and padded with zeros in 6 columns. The \ldots sequences in the example illustrate that the integer is aligned in 6 columns regardless of the remainder of the format specification.

\begin{verbatim}
format(\ldots\textasciitilde!\texttt{\textasciitildeOt}\texttt{\textasciitilde6+\ldots}', [..., Integer, ...])
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{w} Give the next argument to \texttt{write/1}.

\texttt{W} Give the next two arguments to \texttt{write_term/2}. For example, format(\texttt{\textasciitildeW}', [Term, [numbervars(true)]]). This option is SWI-Prolog specific.

Example:

\begin{verbatim}
simple_statistics :-
  <obtain statistics> % left to the user
  format(\texttt{\textasciitildeStatistics\textasciitilde72\textasciitilden'},
  format(\texttt{\textasciitildeRuntime: \textasciitilde2f34} Inferences: \texttt{\textasciitildeD72\textasciitilden'},
  [RunT, Inf]),
  
will output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RunTime: ............ 3.45 Inferences: ............ 60,345</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\texttt{format(+Output, +Format, :Arguments)}

As \texttt{format/2}, but write the output on the given \texttt{Output}. The de-facto standard only allows \texttt{Output} to be a stream. The SWI-Prolog implementation allows all valid arguments for with_output_to/2.\footnote{Earlier versions defined \texttt{sformat/3}. These predicates have been moved to the library backcomp.} For example:

?- format(atom(A), '\textasciitildeD', [1000000]).
A = '1,000,000'

\subsection{Programming Format}

\texttt{format_predicate(+Char, +Head)}

If a sequence \texttt{\textasciitilde c} (tilde, followed by some character) is found, the \texttt{format/3} and friends first check whether the user has defined a predicate to handle the format. If not, the built-in

\footnote{Earlier versions defined \texttt{sformat/3}. These predicates have been moved to the library backcomp.}
formatting rules described above are used. Char is either a character code or a one-character atom, specifying the letter to be (re)defined. Head is a term, whose name and arity are used to determine the predicate to call for the redefined formatting character. The first argument to the predicate is the numeric argument of the format command, or the atom default if no argument is specified. The remaining arguments are filled from the argument list. The example below defines \texttt{\textasciitilde T} to print a timestamp in ISO8601 format (see \texttt{format_time/3}). The subsequent block illustrates a possible call.

\begin{verbatim}
:- format_predicate('T', format_time(_Arg,_Time)).
format_time(_Arg, Stamp) :-
    must_be(number, Stamp),
    format_time(current_output, '%FT%T%z', Stamp).
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
?- get_time(Now),
    format('Now, it is \texttt{\textasciitilde T}\n', [Now]).
Now, it is 2012-06-04T19:02:01+0200
Now = 1338829321.6620328.
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{current_format_predicate}?Code, ??Head
True when \texttt{\textasciitilde Code} is handled by the user-defined predicate specified by \texttt{Head}.

4.32 Terminal Control

The following predicates form a simple access mechanism to the Unix termcap library to provide terminal-independent I/O for screen terminals. These predicates are only available on Unix machines. The SWI-Prolog Windows console accepts the ANSI escape sequences.

\texttt{tty}\texttt{get\_capability}(+Name, +Type, -Result)
Get the capability named \texttt{Name} from the termcap library. See \texttt{termcap(5)} for the capability names. \texttt{Type} specifies the type of the expected result, and is one of \texttt{string}, \texttt{number} or \texttt{bool}. String results are returned as an atom, number results as an integer, and bool results as the atom \texttt{on} or \texttt{off}. If an option cannot be found, this predicate fails silently. The results are only computed once. Successive queries on the same capability are fast.

\texttt{tty\_goto}(+X, +Y)
Goto position \texttt{(X, Y)} on the screen. Note that the predicates \texttt{line\_count/2} and \texttt{line\_position/2} will not have a well-defined behaviour while using this predicate.

\texttt{tty\_put}(+Atom, +Lines)
Put an atom via the termcap library function \texttt{tputs()}. This function decodes padding information in the strings returned by \texttt{tty\_get\_capability/3} and should be used to output these strings. \texttt{Lines} is the number of lines affected by the operation, or 1 if not applicable (as in almost all cases).
4.33. OPERATING SYSTEM INTERACTION

set tty(-OldStream, +NewStream)
Set the output stream used by tty_put/2 and tty_goto/2 to a specific stream. Default is user_output.

tty_size(-Rows, -Columns)
Determine the size of the terminal. Platforms:

Unix  If the system provides ioctl calls for this, these are used and tty_size/2 properly reflects the actual size after a user resize of the window. As a fallback, the system uses tty_get_capability/3 using li and co capabilities. In this case the reported size reflects the size at the first call and is not updated after a user-initiated resize of the terminal.

Windows  Getting the size of the terminal is provided for swipl-win.exe. The requested value reflects the current size. For the multi-threaded version the console that is associated with the user_input stream is used.

4.33  Operating System Interaction

shell(+Command, -Status)
Execute Command on the operating system. Command is given to the Bourne shell (/bin/sh). Status is unified with the exit status of the command.

On Windows, shell/[1,2] executes the command using the CreateProcess() API and waits for the command to terminate. If the command ends with a & sign, the command is handed to the WinExec() API, which does not wait for the new task to terminate. See also win_exec/2 and win_shell/2. Please note that the CreateProcess() API does not imply the Windows command interpreter (cmd.exe and therefore commands that are built in the command interpreter can only be activated using the command interpreter. For example, a file can be compiled using the command below.

?- shell('cmd.exe /C copy file1.txt file2.txt').

Note that many of the operations that can be achieved using the shell built-in commands can easily be achieved using Prolog primitives. See make_directory/1, delete_file/1, rename_file/2, etc. The clib package provides files_en, implementing various high level file operations such as copy_file/2. Using Prolog primitives instead of shell commands improves the portability of your program.

The library process provides process_create/3 and several related primitives that support more fine-grained interaction with processes, including I/O redirection and management of asynchronous processes.

shell(+Command)
Equivalent to 'shell(Command, 0)'.

shell
Start an interactive Unix shell. Default is /bin/sh; the environment variable SHELL overrides this default. Not available for Win32 platforms.
win_exec(+Command, +Show)
Win32 systems only. Spawns a Windows task without waiting for its completion. Show is one of the Win32 SW_* constants written in lowercase without the SW_*: hide maximize minimize restore show showdefault showmaximized showminimized showminnoactive showna shownoactive shownormal. In addition, iconic is a synonym for minimize and normal for shownormal.

win_shell(+Operation, +File, +Show)
Win32 systems only. Opens the document File using the Windows shell rules for doing so. Operation is one of open, print or explore or another operation registered with the shell for the given document type. On modern systems it is also possible to pass a URL as File, opening the URL in Windows default browser. This call interfaces to the Win32 API ShellExecute(). The Show argument determines the initial state of the opened window (if any). See win_exec/2 for defined values.

win_shell(+Operation, +File)
Same as win_shell(Operation, File, normal)

win_registry_get_value(+Key, +Name, -Value)
Win32 systems only. Fetches the value of a Win32 registry key. Key is an atom formed as a path name describing the desired registry key. Name is the desired attribute name of the key. Value is unified with the value. If the value is of type DWORD, the value is returned as an integer. If the value is a string, it is returned as a Prolog atom. Other types are currently not supported. The default ‘root’ is HKEY_CURRENT_USER. Other roots can be specified explicitly as HKEY_CLASSES_ROOT, HKEY_CURRENT_USER, HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE or HKEY_USERS. The example below fetches the extension to use for Prolog files (see README.TXT on the Windows version):

?- win_registry_get_value(  
    'HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE/Software/SWI/Prolog',  
    fileExtension,  
    Ext).
Ext = pl

win_folder(+Name, -Directory)
True if Name is the Windows ‘CSIDL’ of Directory. If Name is unbound, all known Windows special paths are generated. Name is the CSIDL after deleting the leading CSIDL_ and mapping the constant to lowercase. Check the Windows documentation for the function SHGetSpecialFolderPath() for a description of the defined constants. This example extracts the ‘My Documents’ folder:

?- win_folder(personal, MyDocuments).

MyDocuments = 'C:/Documents and Settings/jan/My Documents'
getenv(+Name, -Value)
Get environment variable. Fails silently if the variable does not exist. Please note that environment variable names are case-sensitive on Unix systems and case-insensitive on Windows.

setenv(+Name, +Value)
Set an environment variable. Name and Value must be instantiated to atoms or integers. The environment variable will be passed to shell/[0-2] and can be requested using getenv/2. They also influence expand_file_name/2. Environment variables are shared between threads. Depending on the underlying C library, setenv/2 and unsetenv/1 may not be thread-safe and may cause memory leaks. Only changing the environment once and before starting threads is safe in all versions of SWI-Prolog.

unsetenv(+Name)
Remove an environment variable from the environment. Some systems lack the underlying unsetenv() library function. On these systems unsetenv/1 sets the variable to the empty string.

setlocale(+Category, -Old, +New)
Set/Query the locale setting which tells the C library how to interpret text files, write numbers, dates, etc. Category is one of all, collate, ctype, messages, monetary, numeric or time. For details, please consult the C library locale documentation. See also section 2.18.1. Please note that the locale is shared between all threads and thread-safe usage of setlocale/3 is in general not possible. Do locale operations before starting threads or thoroughly study threading aspects of locale support in your environment before using in multi-threaded environments. Locale settings are used by format_time/3, collation_key/2 and locale_sort/2.

unix(+Command)
This predicate comes from the Quintus compatibility library and provides a partial implementation thereof. It provides access to some operating system features and unlike the name suggests, is not operating system specific. Defined Command's are below.

system(+Command)
Equivalent to calling shell/1. Use for compatibility only.

shell(+Command)
Equivalent to calling shell/1. Use for compatibility only.

shell
Equivalent to calling shell/0. Use for compatibility only.

cd
Equivalent to calling working_directory/2 to the expansion (see expand_file_name/2) of ~. For compatibility only.

cd(+Directory)
Equivalent to calling working_directory/2. Use for compatibility only.

argv(-Argv)
Unify Argy with the list of command line arguments provided to this Prolog run. Please note that Prolog system arguments and application arguments are separated by --. Integer arguments are passed as Prolog integers, float arguments and Prolog floating
point numbers and all other arguments as Prolog atoms. New applications should use the Prolog flag `argv`. See also the Prolog flag `argv`.

A stand-alone program could use the following skeleton to handle command line arguments. See also section 2.10.2.

```
main :-
    current_prolog_flag(argv, Argv),
    append(_PrologArgs, [--|AppArgs], Argv), !,
    main(AppArgs).
```

### 4.33.1 Dealing with time and date

Representing time in a computer system is surprisingly complicated. There are a large number of time representations in use, and the correct choice depends on factors such as compactness, resolution and desired operations. Humans tend to think about time in hours, days, months, years or centuries. Physicists think about time in seconds. But, a month does not have a defined number of seconds. Even a day does not have a defined number of seconds as sometimes a leap-second is introduced to synchronise properly with our earth’s rotation. At the same time, resolution demands a range from better than pico-seconds to millions of years. Finally, civilizations have a wide range of calendars. Although there exist libraries dealing with most if this complexity, our desire to keep Prolog clean and lean stops us from fully supporting these.

For human-oriented tasks, time can be broken into years, months, days, hours, minutes, seconds and a timezone. Physicists prefer to have time in an arithmetic type representing seconds or fraction thereof, so basic arithmetic deals with comparison and durations. An additional advantage of the physicist’s approach is that it requires much less space. For these reasons, SWI-Prolog uses an arithmetic type as its prime time representation.

Many C libraries deal with time using fixed-point arithmetic, dealing with a large but finite time interval at constant resolution. In our opinion, using a floating point number is a more natural choice as we can use a natural unit and the interface does not need to be changed if a higher resolution is required in the future. Our unit of choice is the second as it is the scientific unit. We have placed our origin at 1970-1-1T0:0:0Z for compatibility with the POSIX notion of time as well as with older time support provided by SWI-Prolog.

Where older versions of SWI-Prolog relied on the POSIX conversion functions, the current implementation uses libtai to realise conversion between time-stamps and calendar dates for a period of 10 million years.

**Time and date data structures**

We use the following time representations

#### TimeStamp

A TimeStamp is a floating point number expressing the time in seconds since the Epoch at 1970-1-1.

#### date(Y,M,D,H,Mn,S,Off,TZ,DST)

We call this term a *date-time* structure. The first 5 fields are integers expressing the year,
month (1..12), day (1..31), hour (0..23) and minute (0..59). The S field holds the seconds as a floating point number between 0.0 and 60.0. Off is an integer representing the offset relative to UTC in seconds, where positive values are west of Greenwich. If converted from local time (see stamp_date_time/3), TZ holds the name of the local timezone. If the timezone is not known, TZ is the atom -. DST is true if daylight saving time applies to the current time, false if daylight saving time is relevant but not effective, and - if unknown or the timezone has no daylight saving time.

date(Y,M,D)
Date using the same values as described above. Extracted using date_time_value/3.

time(H,Mn,S)
Time using the same values as described above. Extracted using date_time_value/3.

Time and date predicates

get_time(-TimeStamp)
Return the current time as a TimeStamp. The granularity is system-dependent. See section 4.33.1.

stamp_date_time(+TimeStamp, -DateTime, +TimeZone)
Convert a TimeStamp to a DateTime in the given timezone. See section 4.33.1 for details on the data types. TimeZone describes the timezone for the conversion. It is one of local to extract the local time, 'UTC' to extract a UTC time or an integer describing the seconds west of Greenwich.

date_time_stamp(+DateTime, -TimeStamp)
Compute the timestamp from a date/9 term. Values for month, day, hour, minute or second need not be normalized. This flexibility allows for easy computation of the time at any given number of these units from a given timestamp. Normalization can be achieved following this call with stamp_date_time/3. This example computes the date 200 days after 2006-7-14:

?- date_time_stamp(date(2006,7,214,0,0,0,0,-,-), Stamp),
    stamp_date_time(Stamp, D, 0),
    date_time_value(date, D, Date).
Date = date(2007, 1, 30)

When computing a time stamp from a local time specification, the UTC offset (arg 7), TZ (arg 8) and DST (arg 9) argument may be left unbound and are unified with the proper information. The example below, executed in Amsterdam, illustrates this behaviour. On the 25th of March at 01:00, DST does not apply. At 02.00, the clock is advanced by one hour and thus both 02:00 and 03:00 represent the same time stamp.

?- date_time_stamp(date(2012,3,25,1,0,0,UTCOff,TZ,DST), Stamp).
    UTCOff = -3600,
    TZ = 'CET',
    DST = false,
Stamp = 1332633600.0.

2 ?- date_time_stamp(date(2012,3,25,2,0,0,UTCOff,TZ,DST),
                      Stamp).
       UTCOff = -7200,
       TZ = 'CEST',
       DST = true,
       Stamp = 1332637200.0.

3 ?- date_time_stamp(date(2012,3,25,3,0,0,UTCOff,TZ,DST),
                      Stamp).
       UTCOff = -7200,
       TZ = 'CEST',
       DST = true,
       Stamp = 1332637200.0.

Note that DST and offset calculation are based on the POSIX function mktime(). If mktime() returns an error, a representation_error dst is generated.

date_time_value(?Key, +DateTime, ?Value)
   Extract values from a date/9 term. Provided keys are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>key</th>
<th>value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>year</td>
<td>Calendar year as an integer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>month</td>
<td>Calendar month as an integer 1..12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day</td>
<td>Calendar day as an integer 1..31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hour</td>
<td>Clock hour as an integer 0..23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minute</td>
<td>Clock minute as an integer 0..59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second</td>
<td>Clock second as a float 0.0..60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utc_offset</td>
<td>Offset to UTC in seconds (positive is west)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time_zone</td>
<td>Name of timezone; fails if unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daylight_saving</td>
<td>Bool (true) if dst is in effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>date</td>
<td>Term date(Y,M,D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time</td>
<td>Term time(H,M,S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

format_time(+Out, +Format, +StampOrDateTime)
   Modelled after POSIX strftime(), using GNU extensions. Out is a destination as specified with with_output_to/2. Format is an atom or string with the following conversions. Conversions start with a tilde (%) character. StampOrDateTime is either a numeric time-stamp, a term date(Y,M,D,H,M,S,O,TZ,DST) or a term date(Y,M,D).

   a The abbreviated weekday name according to the current locale. Use format_time/4 for POSIX locale.
   A The full weekday name according to the current locale. Use format_time/4 for POSIX locale.

\footnote{Descriptions taken from Linux Programmer’s Manual}
b The abbreviated month name according to the current locale. Use `format_time/4` for POSIX locale.

B The full month name according to the current locale. Use `format_time/4` for POSIX locale.

c The preferred date and time representation for the current locale.

C The century number (year/100) as a 2-digit integer.

d The day of the month as a decimal number (range 01 to 31).

D Equivalent to `%m/%d/%y`. (For Americans only. Americans should note that in other countries `%d/%m/%y` is rather common. This means that in an international context this format is ambiguous and should not be used.)

e Like `%d`, the day of the month as a decimal number, but a leading zero is replaced by a space.

E Modifier. Not implemented.

f Number of microseconds. The \( f \) can be prefixed by an integer to print the desired number of digits. E.g., \( \%3f \) prints milliseconds. This format is not covered by any standard, but available with different format specifiers in various incarnations of the `strftime()` function.

F Equivalent to `%Y-%m-%d` (the ISO 8601 date format).

g Like `%G`, but without century, i.e., with a 2-digit year (00-99).

G The ISO 8601 year with century as a decimal number. The 4-digit year corresponding to the ISO week number (see `%V`). This has the same format and value as `%y`, except that if the ISO week number belongs to the previous or next year, that year is used instead.

V The ISO 8601:1988 week number of the current year as a decimal number, range 01 to 53, where week 1 is the first week that has at least 4 days in the current year, and with Monday as the first day of the week. See also `%U` and `%W`.

h Equivalent to `%b`.

H The hour as a decimal number using a 24-hour clock (range 00 to 23).

I The hour as a decimal number using a 12-hour clock (range 01 to 12).

j The day of the year as a decimal number (range 001 to 366).

k The hour (24-hour clock) as a decimal number (range 0 to 23); single digits are preceded by a blank. (See also `%H`.)

l The hour (12-hour clock) as a decimal number (range 1 to 12); single digits are preceded by a blank. (See also `%I`.)

m The month as a decimal number (range 01 to 12).

M The minute as a decimal number (range 00 to 59).

n A newline character.

O Modifier to select locale-specific output. Not implemented.

p Either ‘AM’ or ‘PM’ according to the given time value, or the corresponding strings for the current locale. Noon is treated as ‘pm’ and midnight as ‘am’.

P Like `%p` but in lowercase: ‘am’ or ‘pm’ or a corresponding string for the current locale.
The time in a.m. or p.m. notation. In the POSIX locale this is equivalent to ‘%I:%M:%S %p’.

The time in 24-hour notation (%H:%M). For a version including the seconds, see %T below.

s The number of seconds since the Epoch, i.e., since 1970-01-01 00:00:00 UTC.
S The second as a decimal number (range 00 to 60). (The range is up to 60 to allow for occasional leap seconds.)

t A tab character.

T The time in 24-hour notation (%H:%M:%S).

u The day of the week as a decimal, range 1 to 7, Monday being 1. See also %w.
U The week number of the current year as a decimal number, range 00 to 53, starting with the first Sunday as the first day of week 01. See also %V and %W.

w The day of the week as a decimal, range 0 to 6, Sunday being 0.
W The week number of the current year as a decimal number, range 00 to 53, starting with the first Monday as the first day of week 01.

x The preferred date representation for the current locale without the time.
X The preferred time representation for the current locale without the date.

y The year as a decimal number without a century (range 00 to 99).
Y The year as a decimal number including the century.

z The timezone as hour offset from GMT using the format HHmm. Required to emit RFC822-conforming dates (using ‘%a, %d %b %Y %T %z’). Our implementation supports %:z, which modifies the output to HH:mm as required by XML-Schema. Note that both notations are valid in ISO 8601. The sequence %:z is compatible to the GNU date(1) command.

Z The timezone or name or abbreviation.
+ The date and time in date(1) format.
% A literal ‘%’ character.

The table below gives some format strings for popular time representations. RFC1123 is used by HTTP. The full implementation of http_timestamp/2 as available from http/http_header is here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Format string</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xsd</td>
<td>‘%FT%T%:z’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISO8601</td>
<td>‘%FT%T%z’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFC822</td>
<td>‘%a, %d %b %Y %T %z’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFC1123</td>
<td>‘%a, %d %b %Y %T GMT’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http_timestamp(Time, Atom) :-
  stamp_date_time(Time, Date, ‘UTC’),
  format_time(atom(Atom),
    ‘%a, %d %b %Y %T GMT’,
    Date, posix).
4.33. OPERATING SYSTEM INTERACTION

format_time(+Out, +Format, +StampOrDateTime, +Locale)

Format time given a specified Locale. This predicate is a work-around for lacking proper portable and thread-safe time and locale handling in current C libraries. In its current implementation the only value allowed for Locale is posix, which currently only modifies the behaviour of the a, A, b and B format specifiers. The predicate is used to be able to emit POSIX locale week and month names for emitting standardised time-stamps such as RFC1123.

parse_time(+Text, -Stamp)

Same as parse_time(Text, _Format, Stamp). See parse_time/3.

parse_time(+Text, ?Format, -Stamp)

Parse a textual time representation, producing a time-stamp. Supported formats for Text are in the table below. If the format is known, it may be given to reduce parse time and avoid ambiguities. Otherwise, Format is unified with the format encountered.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rfc_1123</td>
<td>Fri, 08 Dec 2006 15:29:44 GMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iso_8601</td>
<td>2006-12-08T17:29:44+02:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20061208T172944+0200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-12-08T15:29Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-12-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20061208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-W49-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2006-342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

day_of_the_week(+Date, -DayOfTheWeek)

Computes the day of the week for a given date. Date = date(Year, Month, Day). Days of the week are numbered from one to seven: Monday = 1, Tuesday = 2, ..., Sunday = 7.

4.33.2 Controlling the swipl-win.exe console window

The Windows executable swipl-win.exe console has a number of predicates to control the appearance of the console. Being totally non-portable, we do not advise using it for your own application, but use XPCE or another portable GUI platform instead. We give the predicates for reference here.

window_title(-Old, +New)

Unify Old with the title displayed in the console and change the title to New.67

win_window_pos(+ListOfOptions)

Interface to the MS-Windows SetWindowPos() function, controlling size, position and stacking order of the window. ListOfOptions is a list that may hold any number of the terms below:

size(W, H)

Change the size of the window. W and H are expressed in character units.

position(X, Y)

Change the top-left corner of the window. The values are expressed in pixel units.

67BUG: This predicate should have been called win_window_title for consistent naming.
zorder(ZOrder)
Change the location in the window stacking order. Values are bottom, top, topmost and notopmost. Topmost windows are displayed above all other windows.

show(Bool)
If true, show the window, if false hide the window.

activate
If present, activate the window.

win_has_menu
True if win_insert_menu/2 and win_insert_menu_item/4 are present.

win_insert_menu(+Label, +Before)
Insert a new entry (pulldown) in the menu. If the menu already contains this entry, nothing is done. The Label is the label and, using the Windows convention, a letter prefixed with & is underlined and defines the associated accelerator key. Before is the label before which this one must be inserted. Using – adds the new entry at the end (right). For example, the call below adds an Application entry just before the Help menu.

```
win_insert_menu('&Application', '&Help')
```

win_insert_menu_item(+Pulldown, +Label, +Before, :Goal)
Add an item to the named Pulldown menu. Label and Before are handled as in win_insert_menu/2, but the label – inserts a separator. Goal is called if the user selects the item.

4.34 File System Interaction

access_file(+File, +Mode)
True if File exists and can be accessed by this Prolog process under mode Mode. Mode is one of the atoms read, write, append, exist, none or execute. File may also be the name of a directory. Fails silently otherwise. access_file(File, none) simply succeeds without testing anything.

If Mode is write or append, this predicate also succeeds if the file does not exist and the user has write access to the directory of the specified location.

exists_file(+File)
True if File exists and is a regular file. This does not imply the user has read and/or write permission for the file.

file_directory_name(+File, -DirectoryName)
Extracts the directory part of File. The returned Directory name does not end in /. There are two special cases. The directory name of / is / itself, and the directory name is . if File does not contain any / characters.

file_base_name(+File, -BaseName)
Extracts the filename part from a path specification. If File does not contain any directory separators, File is returned in BaseName.
same_file(+File1, +File2)
True if both filenames refer to the same physical file. That is, if File1 and File2 are the same
string or both names exist and point to the same file (due to hard or symbolic links and/or
relative vs. absolute paths).

exists_directory(+Directory)
True if Directory exists and is a directory. This does not imply the user has read, search or
write permission for the directory.

delete_file(+File)
Remove File from the file system.

rename_file(+File1, +File2)
Rename File1 as File2. The semantics is compatible to the POSIX semantics of the rename() system call as far as the operating system allows. Notably, if File2 exists, the operation succeeds (except for possible permission errors) and is atomic (meaning there is no window where File2 does not exist).

size_file(+File, -Size)
Unify Size with the size of File in bytes.

time_file(+File, -Time)
Unify the last modification time of File with Time. Time is a floating point number expressing
the seconds elapsed since Jan 1, 1970. See also convert_time/[2,8] and get_time/1.

absolute_file_name(+File, -Absolute)
Expand a local filename into an absolute path. The absolute path is canonised: references to . and .. are deleted. This predicate ensures that expanding a filename returns the same absolute path regardless of how the file is addressed. SWI-Prolog uses absolute filenames to register source files independent of the current working directory. See also absolute_file_name/3. See also absolute_file_name/3 and expand_file_name/2.

absolute_file_name(+Spec, -Absolute, +Options)
Convert the given file specification into an absolute path. Spec is a term Alias(Relative) (e.g.,
(library(lists)), a relative filename or an absolute filename. The primary intention of
this predicate is to resolve files specified as Alias(Relative). Option is a list of options to guide the conversion:

extensions(ListOfExtensions)
List of file extensions to try. Default is ‘’. For each extension, absolute_file_name/3 will first add the extension and then verify the conditions imposed by the other options. If the condition fails, the next extension on the list is tried. Extensions may be specified both as .ext or plain ext.

relative_to(+FileOrDir)
Resolve the path relative to the given directory or the directory holding the given file. Without this option, paths are resolved relative to the working directory (see working_directory/2) or, if Spec is atomic and absolute_file_name/[2,3] is executed in a directive, it uses the current source file as reference.
access(Mode)
  Imposes the condition access_file(File, Mode). Mode is one of read, write, append, execute, exist or none. See also access_file/2.

file_type(Type)
  Defines extensions. Current mapping: txt implies ['', prolog implies ['.pl', ''], executable implies ['.so', ''], qlf implies ['.qlf', ''] and directory implies ['']. The file type source is an alias for prolog for compatibility with SICStus Prolog. See also prolog_file_type/2. This predicate only returns non-directories, unless the option file_type(directory) is specified.

file_errors(fail/error)
  If error (default), throw an existence_error exception if the file cannot be found. If fail, stay silent.68

solutions(first/all)
  If first (default), the predicate leaves no choice-point. Otherwise a choice-point will be left and backtracking may yield more solutions.

expand(true/false)
  If true (default is false) and Spec is atomic, call expand_file_name/2 followed by member/2 on Spec before proceeding. This is a SWI-Prolog extension.

The Prolog flag verbose_file_search can be set to true to help debugging Prolog’s search for files.

This predicate is derived from Quintus Prolog. In Quintus Prolog, the argument order was absolute_file_name(+Spec, +Options, -Path). The argument order has been changed for compatibility with ISO and SICStus. The Quintus argument order is still accepted.

is_absolute_file_name(+File)
  True if File specifies an absolute path name. On Unix systems, this implies the path starts with a '/'. For Microsoft-based systems this implies the path starts with ⟨letter⟩:. This predicate is intended to provide platform-independent checking for absolute paths. See also absolute_file_name/2 and prolog_to_os_filename/2.

file_name_extension(?Base, ?Extension, ?Name)
  This predicate is used to add, remove or test filename extensions. The main reason for its introduction is to deal with different filename properties in a portable manner. If the file system is case-insensitive, testing for an extension will also be done case-insensitive. Extension may be specified with or without a leading dot (.). If an Extension is generated, it will not have a leading dot.

directory_files(+Directory, -Entries)
  Unify Entries with a list of entries in Directory. Each member of Entries is an atom denoting an entry relative to Directory. Entries contains all entries, including hidden files and, if supplied by the OS, the special entries . and .. See also expand_file_name/2.69

---

68 Silent operation was the default up to version 3.2.6.
69 This predicate should be considered a misnomer because it returns entries rather than files. We stick to this name for compatibility with, e.g., SICStus, Ciao and YAP.
4.34. FILE SYSTEM INTERACTION

**expand_file_name(+WildCard, -List)**

Unify List with a sorted list of files or directories matching WildCard. The normal Unix wildcard constructs ‘?’, ‘*’, ‘[...]’ and ‘{...}’ are recognised. The interpretation of ‘{...}’ is slightly different from the C shell (csh(1)). The comma-separated argument can be arbitrary patterns, including ‘{...}’ patterns. The empty pattern is legal as well: ‘\{.pl, \}’ matches either ‘.pl’ or the empty string.

If the pattern contains wildcard characters, only existing files and directories are returned. Expanding a ‘pattern’ without wildcard characters returns the argument, regardless of whether or not it exists.

Before expanding wildcards, the construct $var is expanded to the value of the environment variable var, and a possible leading ~ character is expanded to the user’s home directory.

**prolog_to_os_filename(?PrologPath, ?OsPath)**

Convert between the internal Prolog path name conventions and the operating system path name conventions. The internal conventions follow the POSIX standard, which implies that this predicate is equivalent to =/2 (unify) on POSIX (e.g., Unix) systems. On Windows systems it changes the directory separator from \ into /.

**read_link(+File, -Link, -Target)**

If File points to a symbolic link, unify Link with the value of the link and Target to the file the link is pointing to. Target points to a file, directory or non-existing entry in the file system, but never to a link. Fails if File is not a link. Fails always on systems that do not support symbolic links.

**tmp_file(+Base, -TmpName)**

Create a name for a temporary file. Base is an identifier for the category of file. The TmpName is guaranteed to be unique. If the system halts, it will automatically remove all created temporary files. Base is used as part of the final filename. Portable applications should limit themselves to alphanumeric characters.

Because it is possible to guess the generated filename, attackers may create the filesystem entry as a link and possibly create a security issue. New code should use tmp_file_stream/3.

**tmp_file_stream(+Encoding, -FileName, -Stream)**

Create a temporary filename FileName and open it for writing in the given Encoding. Encoding is a text-encoding name or binary. Stream is the output stream. If the OS supports it, the created file is only accessible to the current user. If the OS supports it, the file is created using the open()-flag O_EXCL, which guarantees that the file did not exist before this call. This predicate is a safe replacement of tmp_file/2. Note that in those cases where the temporary file is needed to store output from an external command, the file must be closed first. E.g., the following downloads a file from a URL to a temporary file and opens the file for reading (on Unix systems you can delete the file for cleanup after opening it for reading):

```
open_url(URL, In) :-
    tmp_file_stream(text, File, Stream),
```
close(Stream),
process_create(curl, ['-o', File, URL], []),
open(File, read, In),
delete_file(File). % Unix-only

Temporary files created using this call are removed if the Prolog process terminates. Calling delete_file/1 using FileName removes the file and removes the entry from the administration of files-to-be-deleted.

**make_directory(+Directory)**
Create a new directory (folder) on the filesystem. Raises an exception on failure. On Unix systems, the directory is created with default permissions (defined by the process umask setting).

**delete_directory(+Directory)**
Delete directory (folder) from the filesystem. Raises an exception on failure. Please note that in general it will not be possible to delete a non-empty directory.

**working_directory(-Old, +New)**
Unify Old with an absolute path to the current working directory and change working directory to New. Use the pattern working_directory(CWD, CWD) to get the current directory. See also absolute_file_name/2 and chdir/1.\(^{71}\) Note that the working directory is shared between all threads.

**chdir(+Path)**
Compatibility predicate. New code should use working_directory/2.

### 4.35 User Top-level Manipulation

**break**
Recursively start a new Prolog top-level. This Prolog top-level has its own stacks, but shares the heap with all break environments and the top-level. Debugging is switched off on entering a break and restored on leaving one. The break environment is terminated by typing the system’s end-of-file character (control-D). If the -t toplevel command line option is given, this goal is started instead of entering the default interactive top-level (prolog/0).

**abort**
Abort the Prolog execution and restart the top-level. If the -t toplevel command line option is given, this goal is started instead of entering the default interactive top-level.

Aborting is implemented by throwing the reserved exception $aborted. This exception can be caught using catch/3, but the recovery goal is wrapped with a predicate that prunes the choice-points of the recovery goal (i.e., as once/1) and re-throws the exception. This is illustrated in the example below, where we press control-C and ‘a’.

\(^{71}\)BUG: Some of the file I/O predicates use local filenames. Changing directory while file-bound streams are open causes wrong results on telling/1, seeing/1 and current_stream/3.
4.36. CREATING A PROTOCOL OF THE USER INTERACTION

?- catch((repeat,fail), E, true).
^CAction (h for help) ? abort
% Execution Aborted

halt
[ISO]
Terminate Prolog execution. Open files are closed, and if the command line option -tty is not active the terminal status (see Unix stty(1)) is restored. Hooks may be registered both in Prolog and in foreign code. Prolog hooks are registered using at_halt/1. halt/0 is equivalent to halt(0). \(^72\)

halt(+Status)
[ISO]
Terminate Prolog execution with the given status. Status is an integer. See also halt/0.

prolog

This goal starts the default interactive top-level. Queries are read from the stream user_input. See also the Prolog flag history. The prolog/0 predicate is terminated (succeeds) by typing the end-of-file character (typically control-D).

The following two hooks allow for expanding queries and handling the result of a query. These hooks are used by the top-level variable expansion mechanism described in section 2.8.

expand_query(+Query, -Expanded, +Bindings, -ExpandedBindings)
Hook in module user, normally not defined. Query and Bindings represents the query read from the user and the names of the free variables as obtained using read_term/3. If this predicate succeeds, it should bind Expanded and ExpandedBindings to the query and bindings to be executed by the top-level. This predicate is used by the top-level (prolog/0). See also expand_answer/2 and term_expansion/2.

expand_answer(+Bindings, -ExpandedBindings)
Hook in module user, normally not defined. Expand the result of a successfully executed top-level query. Bindings is the query \(\langle Name \rangle = \langle Value \rangle\) binding list from the query. ExpandedBindings must be unified with the bindings the top-level should print.

4.36 Creating a Protocol of the User Interaction

SWI-Prolog offers the possibility to log the interaction with the user on a file. \(^73\) All Prolog interaction, including warnings and tracer output, are written to the protocol file.

protocol(+File)
Start protocolling on file File. If there is already a protocol file open, then close it first. If File exists it is truncated.

protocola(+File)
Equivalent to protocol/1, but does not truncate the File if it exists.

\(^72\)BUG: In the multi-threaded version, halt/0 does not work when not called from the main thread. In the current system a permission_error exception is raised. Future versions may enable halt/0 from any thread.

\(^73\)A similar facility was added to Edinburgh C-Prolog by Wouter Jansweijer.
noprotocol
Stop making a protocol of the user interaction. Pending output is flushed on the file.

protocolling(-File)
True if a protocol was started with protocol/1 or protocola/1 and unifies File with the current protocol output file.

4.37 Debugging and Tracing Programs

This section is a reference to the debugger interaction predicates. A more use-oriented overview of the debugger is in section 2.9.

If you have installed XPCE, you can use the graphical front-end of the tracer. This front-end is installed using the predicate guitracer/0.

trace
Start the tracer. trace/0 itself cannot be seen in the tracer. Note that the Prolog top-level treats trace/0 special; it means ‘trace the next goal’.

tracing
True if the tracer is currently switched on. tracing/0 itself cannot be seen in the tracer.

notrace
Stop the tracer. notrace/0 itself cannot be seen in the tracer.

guitracer
Installs hooks (see prolog_trace_interception/4) into the system that redirect tracing information to a GUI front-end providing structured access to variable bindings, graphical overview of the stack and highlighting of relevant source code.

noguitracer
Revert back to the textual tracer.

trace(+Pred)
Equivalent to trace(Pred, +all).

trace(+Pred, +Ports)
Put a trace-point on all predicates satisfying the predicate specification Pred. Ports is a list of port names (call, redo, exit, fail). The atom all refers to all ports. If the port is preceded by a - sign, the trace-point is cleared for the port. If it is preceded by a +, the trace-point is set.

The predicate trace/2 activates debug mode (see debug/0). Each time a port (of the 4-port model) is passed that has a trace-point set, the goal is printed as with trace/0. Unlike trace/0, however, the execution is continued without asking for further information. Examples:

?- trace(hello).
Trace all ports of hello with any arity in any module.

?- trace(foo/2, +fail).
Trace failures of foo/2 in any module.

?- trace(bar/1, -all).
Stop tracing bar/1.
The predicate debugging/0 shows all currently defined trace-points.

**notrace(Goal)**
Call Goal, but suspend the debugger while Goal is executing. The current implementation cuts the choice-points of Goal after successful completion. See once/1. Later implementations may have the same semantics as call/1.

**debug**
Start debugger. In debug mode, Prolog stops at spy- and trace-points, disables last-call optimisation and aggressive destruction of choice points to make debugging information accessible. Implemented by the Prolog flag debug.

Note that the min_free parameter of all stacks is enlarged to 8 K cells if debugging is switched off in order to avoid excessive GC. GC complicates tracing because it renames the _G⟨NNN⟩_ variables and replaces unreachable variables with the atom \bnfmeta{garbage_collected}. Calling nodebug/0 does not reset the initial free-margin because several parts of the top-level and debugger disable debugging of system code regions. See also set_prolog_stack/2.

**nodebug**
Stop debugger. Implemented by the Prolog flag debug. See also debug/0.

**debugging**
Print debug status and spy points on current output stream. See also the Prolog flag debug.

**spy(+Pred)**
Put a spy point on all predicates meeting the predicate specification Pred. See section 4.5.

**nospy(+Pred)**
Remove spy point from all predicates meeting the predicate specification Pred.

**nospyall**
Remove all spy points from the entire program.

**leash(?Ports)**
Set/query leashing (ports which allow for user interaction). Ports is one of +Name, -Name, ?Name or a list of these. +Name enables leashing on that port, -Name disables it and ?Name succeeds or fails according to the current setting. Recognised ports are call, redo, exit, fail and unify. The special shorthand all refers to all ports, full refers to all ports except for the unify port (default). half refers to the call, redo and fail port.

**visible(+Ports)**
Set the ports shown by the debugger. See leash/1 for a description of the Ports specification. Default is full.

**unknown(-Old, +New)**
Edinburgh-Prolog compatibility predicate, interfacing to the ISO Prolog flag unknown. Values are trace (meaning error) and fail. If the unknown flag is set to warning, unknown/2 reports the value as trace.
style_check(+Spec)
Set style checking options. Spec is either₊⟨option⟩, −⟨option⟩, ? ⟨⟨option⟩⟩ or a list of such options.₊⟨option⟩ sets a style checking option, −⟨option⟩ clears it and ? ⟨⟨option⟩⟩ succeeds or fails according to the current setting. consult/1 and derivatives reset the style checking options to their value before loading the file. If, for example, a file containing long atoms should be loaded, the user can start the file with:

```prolog
:- style_check(-atom).
```

The currently available options are given below with their default between brackets.

singleton(true)
The predicate read_clause/1 (used by the compiler to read source code) warns on variables appearing only once in a term (clause) which have a name not starting with an underscore. See section 2.15.1 for details on variable handling and warnings.

atom(true)
The predicate read/1 and derived predicates produce an error message on quoted atoms or strings with more than 6 unescaped newlines. Newlines may be escaped with \ or \c. This flag also enables warnings on \langlenewline⟩ followed by blank space in native mode. See section 2.15.1.

discontiguous(true)
Warn if the clauses for a predicate are not together in the same source file. In is advised to disable the warning for discontiguous predicates using the discontiguous/1 directive.

string(false)
Backward compatibility. See the Prolog flag double_quotes (current_prolog_flag/2).

charset(false)
Warn on atoms and variables holding non-ASCII characters that are not quoted. See also section 2.15.1.

### 4.38 Obtaining Runtime Statistics

statistics(+Key, -Value)
Unify system statistics determined by Key with Value. The possible keys are given in the table 4.3. This predicate supports additional keys for compatibility reasons. These keys are described in table 4.4.

statistics
Display a table of system statistics on the current output stream.

time(:Goal)
Execute Goal just like call/1 and print time used, number of logical inferences and the average number of lips (logical inferences per second). Note that SWI-Prolog counts the actual

---

74In older versions ‘?’ was a prefix operator. In versions after 5.5.13, explicit brackets are needed.
### Native keys (times as float in seconds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>agc</td>
<td>Number of atom garbage collections performed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agc_gained</td>
<td>Number of atoms removed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agc_time</td>
<td>Time spent in atom garbage collections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>process_cputime</td>
<td>(User) CPU time since Prolog was started in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cputime</td>
<td>(User) CPU time since thread was started in seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inferences</td>
<td>Total number of passes via the call and redo ports since Prolog was started</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heapused</td>
<td>Bytes of heap in use by Prolog (0 if not maintained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heap_gc</td>
<td>Number of heap garbage collections performed. Only provided if SWI-Prolog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is configured with Boehm-GC. See also garbage_collect_heap/0.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c_stack</td>
<td>System (C-) stack limit. 0 if not known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stack</td>
<td>Total memory in use for stacks in all threads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td>Allocated size of the local stack in bytes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>localused</td>
<td>Number of bytes in use on the local stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>locallimit</td>
<td>Size to which the local stack is allowed to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local_shifts</td>
<td>Number of local-stack expansions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global</td>
<td>Allocated size of the global stack in bytes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>globalused</td>
<td>Number of bytes in use on the global stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>globallimit</td>
<td>Size to which the global stack is allowed to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global_shifts</td>
<td>Number of global-stack expansions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trail</td>
<td>Allocated size of the trail stack in bytes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trailused</td>
<td>Number of bytes in use on the trail stack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>traillimit</td>
<td>Size to which the trail stack is allowed to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trail_shifts</td>
<td>Number of trail-stack expansions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shift_time</td>
<td>Time spent in stack-shifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atoms</td>
<td>Total number of defined atoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functors</td>
<td>Total number of defined name/arity pairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clauses</td>
<td>Total number of clauses in the program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>modules</td>
<td>Total number of defined modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>codes</td>
<td>Total size of (virtual) executable code in words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threads</td>
<td>MT-version: number of active threads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>threads_created</td>
<td>MT-version: number of created threads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thread_cputime</td>
<td>MT-version: seconds CPU time used by finished threads. Supported on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Windows-NT and later, Linux and possibly a few more. Verify it gives plausible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>results before using.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Keys for `statistics/2`. Space is expressed in bytes. Time is expressed in seconds, represented as a floating point number.
### Compatibility keys (times in milliseconds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>runtime</td>
<td>[ CPU time, CPU time since last ] (milliseconds, excluding time spent in garbage collection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>system_time</td>
<td>[ System CPU time, System CPU time since last ] (milliseconds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>real_time</td>
<td>[ Wall time, Wall time since last ] (integer seconds. See get_time/1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walltime</td>
<td>[ Wall time since start, Wall time since last] (milliseconds, SICStus compatibility)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>memory</td>
<td>[ Total unshared data, free memory ] (Uses getrusage() if available, otherwise incomplete own statistics.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stacks</td>
<td>[ global use, local use ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>program</td>
<td>[ heap, 0 ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>global_stack</td>
<td>[ global use, global free ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local_stack</td>
<td>[ local use, local free ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trail</td>
<td>[ trail use, trail free ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garbage_collection</td>
<td>[ number of GC, bytes gained, time spent, bytes left ] The last column is a SWI-Prolog extension. It contains the sum of the memory left after each collection, which can be divided by the count to find the average working set size after GC. Use [Count, Gained, Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stack_shifts</td>
<td>[ global shifts, local shifts, time spent ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atoms</td>
<td>[ number, memory use, 0 ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atom_garbage_collection</td>
<td>[ number of AGC, bytes gained, time spent ] Same as memory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Compatibility keys for statistics/2. Time is expressed in milliseconds.
executed number of inferences rather than the number of passes through the call and redo ports of the theoretical 4-port model. If \textit{Goal} is non-deterministic, print statistics for each solution, where the reported values are relative to the previous answer.

4.39 Execution profiling

This section describes the hierarchical execution profiler introduced in SWI-Prolog 5.1.10. This profiler is based on ideas from \texttt{gprof} described in [Graham \textit{et al.}, 1982]. The profiler consists of two parts: the information-gathering component built into the kernel,\footnote{There are two implementations; one based on \texttt{setitimer()} using the \texttt{SIGPROF} signal and one using Windows Multi Media (MM) timers. On other systems the profiler is not provided.} and a presentation component which is defined in the \texttt{statistics} library. The latter can be hooked, which is used by the XPCE module \texttt{swi/pce_profile} to provide an interactive graphical representation of results.

4.39.1 Profiling predicates

Currently, the interface is kept compatible with the old profiler. As experience grows, it is likely that the old interface is replaced with one that better reflects the new capabilities. Feel free to examine the internal interfaces and report useful applications thereof.

\textbf{profile}(:\textit{Goal})

Execute \textit{Goal} just like \texttt{time/1}, collecting profiling statistics, and call \texttt{show_profile(plain, 25)}. With XPCE installed this opens a graphical interface to the collected profiling data.

\textbf{profile}(:\textit{Goal}, +\textit{Style}, +\textit{Number})

Execute \textit{Goal} just like \texttt{time/1}. Collect profiling statistics and show the top \textit{Number} procedures on the current output stream (see \texttt{show_profile/1}) using \textit{Style}. The results are kept in the database until \texttt{reset_profiler/0} or \texttt{profile/3} is called and can be displayed again with \texttt{show_profile/1}. The \texttt{profile/1} predicate is a backward compatibility interface to \texttt{profile/1}. The other predicates in this section are low-level predicates for special cases.

\textbf{show_profile}(+\textit{Style}, +\textit{Number})

Show the collected results of the profiler. It shows the top \textit{Number} predicates according to the percentage CPU-time used. If \textit{Style} is \texttt{plain}, the time spent in each of the predicates is displayed. If \textit{Style} is \texttt{cumulative}, the time spent in its siblings ( callees) is added to the predicate.

This predicate first calls \texttt{prolog:show_profile_hook/2}. If XPCE is loaded, this hook is used to activate a GUI interface to visualise the profile results.

\textbf{show_profile}(+\textit{Number})

Compatibility. Same as \texttt{show_profile(plain, \textit{Number}).}

\textbf{profiler}(-\textit{Old}, +\textit{New})

Query or change the status of the profiler. The status is a boolean (\texttt{true} or \texttt{false}) stating whether or not the profiler is collecting data. It can be used to enable or disable profiling certain parts of the program.
Figure 4.1: Execution profiler showing the activity of the predicate chat:inv_map_list/5.

**reset_profiler**

Switches the profiler to `false` and clears all collected statistics.

**noprofile(+Name/+Arity, ...)**

Declares the predicate `Name/Arity` to be invisible to the profiler. The time spent in the named predicate is added to the caller, and the callees are linked directly to the caller. This is particularly useful for simple meta-predicates such as `call/1, ignore/1, catch/3`, etc.

### 4.39.2 Visualizing profiling data

Browsing the annotated call-tree as described in section 4.39.3 itself is not very attractive. Therefore, the results are combined per predicate, collecting all *callers* and *callees* as well as the propagation of time and activations in both directions. Figure 4.1 illustrates this. The central yellowish line is the ‘current’ predicate with counts for time spent in the predicate (‘Self’), time spent in its children (‘Siblings’), activations through the call and redo ports. Above that are the *callers*. Here, the two time fields indicate how much time is spent serving each of the callers. The columns sum to the time in the yellowish line. The caller `<recursive>` is the number of recursive calls. Below the yellowish lines are the callees, with the time spent in the callee itself for serving the current predicate and the time spent in the callees of the callee (‘Siblings’), so the whole time-block adds up to the ‘Siblings’ field of the current predicate. The ‘Access’ fields show how many times the current predicate accesses each of the callees.

The predicates have a menu that allows changing the view of the detail window to the given caller or callee, showing the documentation (if it is a built-in) and/or jumping to the source.

The statistics shown in the report field of figure 4.1 show the following information:

- **samples**
  Number of times the call-tree was sampled for collecting time statistics. On most hardware, the resolution of `SIGPROF` is 1/100 second. This number must be sufficiently large to get reliable timing figures. The `Time` menu allows viewing time as samples, relative time or absolute time.

- **sec**
  Total user CPU time with the profiler active.

- **predicates**
  Total count of predicates that have been called at least one time during the profile.
• **nodes**
   Number of nodes in the call-tree.

• **distortion**
   How much of the time is spent building the call-tree as a percentage of the total execution time. Timing samples while the profiler is building the call-tree are not added to the call-tree.

### 4.39.3 Information gathering

While the program executes under the profiler, the system builds a *dynamic* call-tree. It does this using three hooks from the kernel: one that starts a new goal (*profCall*), one that tells the system which goal is resumed after an *exit* (*profExit*) and one that tells the system which goal is resumed after a *fail* (i.e., which goal is used to *retry* (*profRedo*)). The *profCall()* function finds or creates the subnode for the argument predicate below the current node, increments the call-count of this link and returns the sub-node which is recorded in the Prolog stack-frame. Choice-points are marked with the current profiling node. *profExit()* and *profRedo()* pass the profiling node where execution resumes.

Just using the above algorithm would create a much too big tree due to recursion. For this reason the system performs detection of recursion. In the simplest case, recursive procedures increment the ‘recursive’ count on the current node. Mutual recursion, however, is not easily detected. For example, *call/1* can call a predicate that uses *call/1* itself. This can be viewed as a recursive invocation, but this is generally not desirable. Recursion is currently assumed if the same predicate with the same parent appears higher in the call-graph. Early experience with some non-trivial programs are promising.

The last part of the profiler collects statistics on the CPU time used in each node. On systems providing `setitimer()` with `SIGPROF`, it ‘ticks’ the current node of the call-tree each time the timer fires. On Windows, a MM-timer in a separate thread checks 100 times per second how much time is spent in the profiled thread and adds this to the current node. See section 4.39.3 for details.

#### Profiling in the Windows Implementation

Profiling in the Windows version is similar, but as profiling is a statistical process it is good to be aware of the implementation\(^\text{76}\) for proper interpretation of the results.

Windows does not provide timers that fire asynchronously, frequent and proportional to the CPU time used by the process. Windows does provide multi-media timers that can run at high frequency. Such timers, however, run in a separate thread of execution and they are fired on the wall clock rather than the amount of CPU time used. The profiler installs such a timer running, for saving CPU time, rather inaccurately at about 100 Hz. Each time it is fired, it determines the CPU time in milliseconds used by Prolog since the last time it was fired. If this value is non-zero, active predicates are incremented with this value.

### 4.40 Memory Management

**garbage_collect**

Invoke the global and trail stack garbage collector. Normally the garbage collector is invoked automatically if necessary. Explicit invocation might be useful to reduce the need for

\(^{76}\)We hereby acknowledge Lionel Fourquaux, who suggested the design described here after a newsnet enquiry.
garbage collections in time-critical segments of the code. After the garbage collection `trim_stacks/0` is invoked to release the collected memory resources.

**garbage_collect_atoms**

Reclaim unused atoms. Normally invoked after `agc_margin` (a Prolog flag) atoms have been created. On multi-threaded versions the actual collection is delayed until there are no threads performing normal garbage collection. In this case `garbage_collect_atoms/0` returns immediately. Note that there is no guarantee it will *ever* happen, as there may always be threads performing garbage collection.

**trim_stacks**

Release stack memory resources that are not in use at this moment, returning them to the operating system. It can be used to release memory resources in a backtracking loop, where the iterations require typically seconds of execution time and very different, potentially large, amounts of stack space. Such a loop can be written as follows:

```prolog
loop :-
    generator,
    trim_stacks,
    potentially_expensive_operation,
    stop_condition, !.
```

The Prolog top-level loop is written this way, reclaiming memory resources after every user query.

**set_prolog_stack(+Stack, +KeyValue)**

Set a parameter for one of the Prolog runtime stacks. `Stack` is one of `local`, `global`, `trail` or `argument`. The table below describes the `Key(Value)` pairs. `Value` can be an arithmetic integer expression. For example, to specify a 2 GB limit for the global stack, one can use:

```
?- set_prolog_stack(global, limit(2*10**9)).
```

Current settings can be retrieved with `prolog_stack_property/2`.

**limit(+Bytes)**

Set the limit to which the stack is allowed to grow. If the specified value is lower than the current usage a `permission_error` is raised. If the limit is larger than supported, the system silently reduces the requested limit to the system limit.

**min_free(+Cells)**

Minimum amount of free space after trimming or shifting the stack. Setting this value higher can reduce the number of garbage collections and stack-shifts at the cost of higher memory usage. The spare stack amount is reported and specified in ‘cells’. A cell is 4 bytes in the 32-bit version and 8 bytes on the 64-bit version. See `address_bits`. See also `trim_stacks/0` and `debug/0`.

**spare(+Cells)**

All stacks trigger overflow before actually reaching the limit, so the resulting error can be handled gracefully. The spare stack is used for `print_message/2` from the garbage collection.
4.41. WINDOWS DDE INTERFACE

collector and for handling exceptions. The default suffices, unless the user redefines related hooks. Do not specify large values for this because it reduces the amount of memory available for your real task.

Related hooks are `message_hook/3` (redefining GC messages), `prolog_trace_interception/4` and `prolog_exception_hook/4`.

\[ \text{prolog_stack_property(?Stack, ?KeyValue)} \]

True if `KeyValue` is a current property of `Stack`. See `set_prolog_stack/2` for defined properties.

4.41 Windows DDE interface

The predicates in this section deal with MS-Windows ‘Dynamic Data Exchange’ or DDE protocol. A Windows DDE conversation is a form of interprocess communication based on sending reserved window events between the communicating processes.

Failing DDE operations raise an error of the structure below, where `Operation` is the name of the (partial) operation that failed and `Message` is a translation of the operator error code. For some errors, `Context` provides additional comments.

\[ \text{error(dde_error(Operation, Message), Context)} \]

4.41.1 DDE client interface

The DDE client interface allows Prolog to talk to DDE server programs. We will demonstrate the use of the DDE interface using the Windows PROGMAN (Program Manager) application:

1 ?- open_dde_conversation(progman, progman, C).

\[ \text{C = 0} \]

2 ?- dde_request(0, groups, X)

--> Unifies X with description of groups

3 ?- dde_execute(0, '[CreateGroup("DDE Demo")]').

true.

4 ?- close_dde_conversation(0).

true.

For details on interacting with `progman`, use the SDK online manual section on the Shell DDE interface. See also the Prolog library(`progman`), which may be used to write simple Windows setup scripts in Prolog.

\[ ^77 \text{This interface is contributed by Don Dwiggins.} \]
open_dde_conversation(+Service, +Topic, -Handle)
Open a conversation with a server supporting the given service name and topic (atoms). If successful, Handle may be used to send transactions to the server. If no willing server is found this predicate fails silently.

close_dde_conversation(+Handle)
Close the conversation associated with Handle. All opened conversations should be closed when they’re no longer needed, although the system will close any that remain open on process termination.

dde_request(+Handle, +Item, -Value)
Request a value from the server. Item is an atom that identifies the requested data, and Value will be a string (CF_TEXT data in DDE parlance) representing that data, if the request is successful.

dde_execute(+Handle, +Command)
Request the DDE server to execute the given command string. Succeeds if the command could be executed and fails with an error message otherwise.

dde_poke(+Handle, +Item, +Command)
Issue a POKE command to the server on the specified Item. command is passed as data of type CF_TEXT.

4.41.2 DDE server mode
The library(dde) defines primitives to realise simple DDE server applications in SWI-Prolog. These features are provided as of version 2.0.6 and should be regarded as prototypes. The C part of the DDE server can handle some more primitives, so if you need features not provided by this interface, please study library(dde).

dde_register_service(+Template, +Goal)
Register a server to handle DDE request or DDE execute requests from other applications. To register a service for a DDE request, Template is of the form:

+Service(+Topic, +Item, +Value)

Service is the name of the DDE service provided (like progman in the client example above). Topic is either an atom, indicating Goal only handles requests on this topic, or a variable that also appears in Goal. Item and Value are variables that also appear in Goal. Item represents the request data as a Prolog atom.78

The example below registers the Prolog current_prolog_flag/2 predicate to be accessible from other applications. The request may be given from the same Prolog as well as from another application.

?- dde_register_service(prolog(current_prolog_flag, F, V),
                        current_prolog_flag(F, V)).

78 Up to version 3.4.5 this was a list of character codes. As recent versions have atom garbage collection there is no need for this anymore.
Handling DDE `execute` requests is very similar. In this case the template is of the form:

```
+Service(+Topic, +Item)
```

Passing a `Value` argument is not needed as `execute` requests either succeed or fail. If `Goal` fails, a ‘not processed’ is passed back to the caller of the DDE request.

```prolog
dde_unregister_service(+Service)
```

Stop responding to `Service`. If Prolog is halted, it will automatically call this on all open services.

```prolog
dde_current_service(-Service, -Topic)
```

Find currently registered services and the topics served on them.

```prolog
dde_current_connection(-Service, -Topic)
```

Find currently open conversations.

## 4.42 Miscellaneous

### dwim_match(+Atom1, +Atom2)

True if `Atom1` matches `Atom2` in the ‘Do What I Mean’ sense. Both `Atom1` and `Atom2` may also be integers or floats. The two atoms match if:

- They are identical
- They differ by one character (spy ≡ spu)
- One character is inserted/deleted (debug ≡ deug)
- Two characters are transposed (trace ≡ tarce)
- ‘Sub-words’ are glued differently (existsfile ≡ existsFile ≡ exists_file)
- Two adjacent sub-words are transposed (existsFile ≡ fileExists)

### dwim_match(+Atom1, +Atom2, -Difference)

Equivalent to `dwim_match/2`, but unifies `Difference` with an atom identifying the difference between `Atom1` and `Atom2`. The return values are (in the same order as above): `equal`, `mismatched_char`, `inserted_char`, `transposed_char`, `separated` and `transposed_word`.

### wildcard_match(+Pattern, +String)

True if `String` matches the wildcard pattern `Pattern`. `Pattern` is very similar to the Unix `csh` pattern matcher. The patterns are given below:
? Matches one arbitrary character.
* Matches any number of arbitrary characters.
[...] Matches one of the characters specified between the brackets.
    ⟨char1⟩-⟨char2⟩ indicates a range.
{...} Matches any of the patterns of the comma-separated list between the braces.

Example:

?- wildcard_match('^[a-z]*.{pro,pl}[^\^]', 'a_hello.pl%').
true.

sleep(+Time)
Suspend execution Time seconds. Time is either a floating point number or an integer. Gran-
ularity is dependent on the system’s timer granularity. A negative time causes the timer to
return immediately. On most non-realtime operating systems we can only ensure execution is
suspended for at least Time seconds.

On Unix systems the sleep/1 predicate is realised—in order of preference—by nanosleep(),
usleep(), select() if the time is below 1 minute, or sleep(). On Windows systems Sleep() is used.
A Prolog module is a collection of predicates which defines a public interface by means of a set of provided predicates and operators. Prolog modules are defined by an ISO standard. Unfortunately, the standard is considered a failure and, as far as we are aware, not implemented by any concrete Prolog implementation. The SWI-Prolog module system syntax is derived from the Quintus Prolog module system. The Quintus module system has been the starting point for the module systems of a number of mainstream Prolog systems, such as SICStus, Ciao and YAP. The underlying primitives of the SWI-Prolog module system differs from the mentioned systems. These primitives allow for multiple modules in a file, hierarchical modules, emulation of other modules interfaces, etc.

This chapter motivates and describes the SWI-Prolog module system. Novices can start using the module system after reading section 5.2 and section 5.3. The primitives defined in these sections suffice for basic usage until one needs to export predicates that call or manage other predicates dynamically (e.g., use call/1, assert/1, etc.). Such predicates are called meta predicates and are discussed in section 5.4. Section 5.5 to section 5.8 describe more advanced issues. Starting with section 5.9, we discuss more low-level aspects of the SWI-Prolog module systems that are used to implement the visible module system, and can be used to build other code reuse mechanisms.

5.1 Why Use Modules?

In classic Prolog systems, all predicates are organised in a single namespace and any predicate can call any predicate. Because each predicate in a file can be called from anywhere in the program, it becomes very hard to find the dependencies and enhance the implementation of a predicate without risking to break the overall application. This is true for any language, but even worse for Prolog due to its frequent need for ‘helper predicates’.

A Prolog module encapsulates a set of predicates and defines an interface. Modules can import other modules, which makes the dependencies explicit. Given explicit dependencies and a well-defined interface, it becomes much easier to change the internal organisation of a module without breaking the overall application.

Explicit dependencies can also be used by the development environment. The SWI-Prolog library prolog_xref can be used to analyse completeness and consistency of modules. This library is used by the built-in editor PceEmacs for syntax highlighting, jump-to-definition, etc.

5.2 Defining a Module

Modules are normally created by loading a module file. A module file is a file holding a module/2 directive as its first term. The module/2 directive declares the name and the public (i.e., externally visible) predicates of the module. The rest of the file is loaded into the module. Below is an example
of a module file, defining reverse/2 and hiding the helper predicate rev/3. A module can use all built-in predicates and, by default, cannot redefine system predicates.

```prolog
:- module(reverse, [reverse/2]).
reverse(List1, List2) :-
    rev(List1, [], List2).
rev([], List, List).
rev([Head|List1], List2, List3) :-
    rev(List1, [Head|List2], List3).
```

The module is named reverse. Typically, the name of a module is the same as the name of the file by which it is defined without the filename extension, but this naming is not enforced. Modules are organised in a single and flat namespace and therefore module names must be chosen with some care to avoid conflicts. As we will see, typical applications of the module system rarely use the name of a module explicitly in the source text.

```prolog
:- module(+Module, +PublicList)
```

This directive can only be used as the first term of a source file. It declares the file to be a module file, defining a module named Module. Note that a module name is an atom. The module exports the predicates of PublicList. PublicList is a list of predicate indicators (name/arity or name//arity pairs) or operator declarations using the format op(Precedence, Type, Name). Operators defined in the export list are available inside the module as well as to modules importing this module. See also section 4.24.

Compatible to Ciao Prolog, if Module is unbound, it is unified with the basename without extension of the file being loaded.

### 5.3 Importing Predicates into a Module

Predicates can be added to a module by importing them from another module. Importing adds predicates to the namespace of a module. An imported predicate can be called exactly the same as a locally defined predicate, although its implementation remains part of the module in which it has been defined.

Importing the predicates from another module is achieved using the directives use_module/1 or use_module/2. Note that both directives take file name(s) as arguments. I.e., modules are imported based on their file name rather than their module name.

```prolog
use_module(+Files)
```

Load the file(s) specified with File just like ensure_loaded/1. The files must all be module files. All exported predicates from the loaded files are imported into the module from which this predicate is called. This predicate is equivalent to ensure_loaded/1, except that it raises an error if File is not a module file.

The imported predicates acts as weak symbols in the module into which they are imported. This implies that a local definition of a predicate overrides (clobbers) the imported definition. If the flag warn_overrideImplicitImport is true (default), a warning is printed. Below
is an example of a module that uses library(lists), but redefines flatten/2, giving it a totally different meaning:

```prolog
:- module(shapes, []).
:- use_module(library(lists)).
flatten(cube, square).
flatten(ball, circle).
```

Loading the above file prints the following message:

```
Warning: /home/janw/Bugs/Import/t.pl:5:
Local definition of shapes:flatten/2 overrides weak import from lists
```

This warning can be avoided by (1) using use_module/2 to only import the predicates from list that are actually used in the ‘shapes’ module, (2) using the except([flatten/2]) option of use_module/2, (3) use :- abolish(flatten/2). before the local definition or (4) setting warn_override Implicit_Import to false. Globally disabling this warning is only recommended if overriding imported predicates is common as a result of design choices or the program is ported from a system that silently overrides imported predicates.

Note that it is always an error to import two modules with use_module/1 that export the same predicate. Such conflicts must be resolved with use_module/2 as described above.

**use_module(+File, +ImportList)**

Load File, which must be a module file and import the predicates as specified by ImportList. ImportList is a list of predicate indicators specifying the predicates that will be imported from the loaded module. ImportList also allows for renaming or import-everything-except. See also import option of load_files/2. The first example below loads member/2 from the lists library and append/2 under the name list_concat, which is how this predicate is named in YAP. The second example loads all exports from library option, except for meta_options/3. These renaming facilities are generally used to deal with portability issues with as few as possible changes to the actual code. See also section C and section 5.7.

```prolog
:- use_module(library(lists), [ member/2, append/2 as list_concat ]).
:- use_module(library(option), except([meta_options/3])).
```

The module/2 directive, use_module/1 and use_module/2 are sufficient to partition a simple Prolog program into modules. The SWI-Prolog graphical cross-referencing tool gxref/0 can be used to analyse the dependencies between non-module files and propose module declarations for each file.
5.4 Defining a meta-predicate

A meta-predicate is a predicate that calls other predicates dynamically, modifies a predicate or reasons about properties of a predicate. Such predicates use either a compound term or a predicate indicator to describe the predicate they address, e.g., assert(name(jan)) or abolish(name/1). With modules, this simple schema no longer works as each module defines its own mapping from name+arity to predicate. This is resolved by wrapping the original description in a term ⟨module⟩:(term), e.g., assert(person:name(jan)) or abolish(person:name/1).

Of course, calling assert/1 from inside a module, we expect to assert to a predicate local to this module. In other words, we do not wish to provide this :/2 wrapper by hand. The meta_predicate/1 directive tells the compiler that certain arguments are terms that will be used to lookup a predicate and thus need to be wrapped (qualified) with ⟨module⟩:(term), unless they are already wrapped.

In the example below, we use this to define maplist/3 inside a module. The argument ‘2’ in the meta_predicate declaration means that the argument is module sensitive and refers to a predicate with an arity that is two more than the term that is passed in. The compiler only distinguishes the values 0..9 and :; which denote module-sensitive arguments, from +, − and ?, which denote modes. The values 0..9 are used by the cross-referencer and syntax highlighting. Note that the helper predicate maplist_/3 does not need to be declared as a meta-predicate because the maplist/3 wrapper already ensures that Goal is qualified as ⟨module⟩:Goal. See the description of meta_predicate/1 for details.

```prolog
:- module(maplist, [maplist/3]).
:- meta_predicate maplist(2, ?, ?).

%% maplist(:Goal, +List1, ?List2)
%% True if Goal can successfully be applied to all
%% successive pairs of elements from List1 and List2.
maplist(Goal, L1, L2) :-
    maplist_(L1, L2, Goal).
maplist_([], [], _).
maplist_([H0|T0], [H|T], Goal) :-
    call(Goal, H0, H),
    maplist_(T0, T, Goal).
```

**meta_predicate** +Head, …

Define the predicates referenced by the comma-separated list Head as meta-predicates. Each argument of each head is a meta argument specifier. Defined specifiers are given below. Only 0..9, : and ^ are interpreted; the mode declarations +, − and ? are ignored.

**0..9**

The argument is a term that is used to reference a predicate with N more arguments than the given argument term. For example: call(0) or maplist(1, +).
5.4. DEFINING A META-PREDICATE

: The argument is module sensitive, but does not directly refer to a predicate. For example:
consult(:).

- The argument is not module sensitive and unbound on entry.

? The argument is not module sensitive and the mode is unspecified.

* The argument is not module sensitive and the mode is unspecified. The specification * is equivalent to ?. It is accepted for compatibility reasons. The predicate predicate_property/2 reports arguments declared using * with ?.

+ The argument is not module sensitive and bound (i.e., nonvar) on entry.

^ This extension is used to denote the possibly ^-annotated goal of setof/3, bagof/3, aggregate/3 and aggregate/4. It is processed similar to ‘0’, but leaving the ^/2 intact.

// The argument is a DCG body. See phrase/3.

Each argument that is module sensitive (i.e., marked 0..9, : or ^) is qualified with the context module of the caller if it is not already qualified. The implementation ensures that the argument is passed as ⟨module⟩:⟨term⟩, where ⟨module⟩ is an atom denoting the name of a module and ⟨term⟩ itself is not a :/2 term where the first argument is an atom. Below is a simple declaration and a number of queries.

```
:- meta_predicate
    meta(0, +).
meta(Module:Term, _Arg) :-
    format('Module=\w, Term = \q\n', [Module, Term]).
```

?- meta(test, x).
Module=user, Term = test
?- meta(m1:test, x).
Module=m1, Term = test
?- m2:meta(test, x).
Module=m2, Term = test
?- m1:meta(m2:test, x).
Module=m2, Term = test
?- meta(m1:m2:test, x).
Module=m2, Term = test
?- meta(m1:42:test, x).
Module=42, Term = test
The `meta_predicate/1` declaration is the portable mechanism for defining meta-predicates and replaces the old SWI-Prolog specific mechanism provided by the deprecated predicates `module_transparent/1`, `context_module/1` and `strip_module/3`. See also section 5.15.

5.5 Overruling Module Boundaries

The module system described so far is sufficient to distribute programs over multiple modules. There are, however, cases in which we would like to be able to overrule this schema and explicitly call a predicate in some module or assert explicitly into some module. Calling in a particular module is useful for debugging from the user’s top-level or to access multiple implementations of the same interface that reside in multiple modules. Accessing the same interface from multiple modules cannot be achieved using importing because importing a predicate with the same name and arity from two modules results in a name conflict. Asserting in a different module can be used to create models dynamically in a new module. See section 5.12.

Direct addressing of modules is achieved using a `:/2` explicitly in a program and relies on the module qualification mechanism described in section 5.4. Here are a few examples:

```prolog
?- assert(world:done). % asserts done/0 into module world
?- world:asserta(done). % the same
?- world:done. % calls done/0 in module world
```

Note that the second example is the same due to the Prolog flag `colon_sets_calling_context`. The system predicate `asserta/1` is called in the module `world`, which is possible because system predicates are `visible` in all modules. At the same time, the calling context is set to `world`. Because meta arguments are qualified with the calling context, the resulting call is the same as the first example.

5.5.1 Explicit manipulation of the calling context

Quintus’ derived module systems have no means to separate the lookup module (for finding predicates) from the calling context (for qualifying meta arguments). Some other Prolog implementations (e.g., ECLiPSe and IF/Proloog) distinguish these operations, using `@/2` for setting the calling context of a goal. This is provided by SWI-Prolog, currently mainly to support compatibility layers.

```prolog
@(:Goal, +Module)
```

Execute `Goal`, setting the calling context to `Module`. Setting the calling context affects meta-predicates, for which meta arguments are qualified with `Module` and transparent predicates (see `module_transparent/1`). It has no implications for other predicates.

For example, the code `asserta(done)@world` is the same as `asserta(world:done)`. Unlike in `world:asserta(done)`, `asserta/1` is resolved in the current module rather than the module `world`. This makes no difference for system predicates, but usually does make a difference for user predicates.

Nota that SWI-Prolog does not define `@` as an operator. Some systems define this construct using `op(900, xfx, @)`.
5.6 Interacting with modules from the toplevel

Debugging often requires interaction with predicates that reside in modules: running them, setting spy-points on them, etc. This can be achieved using the \langle module \rangle: \langle term \rangle construct explicitly as described above. In SWI-Prolog, you may also wish to omit the module qualification. Setting a spy-point (spy/1) on a plain predicate sets a spy-point on any predicate with that name in any module. Editing (edit/1) or calling an unqualified predicate invokes the DWIM (Do What I Mean) mechanism, which generally suggests the correct qualified query.

Mainly for compatibility, we provide module/1 to switch the module with which the interactive toplevel interacts:

```
module(+Module)
```

The call module \( (\text{Module}) \) may be used to switch the default working module for the interactive toplevel (see prolog/0). This may be used when debugging a module. The example below lists the clauses of \text{file_of_label/2} in the module \text{tex}.

```
1 ?- module(tex).
true.
tex: 2 ?- listing(file_of_label/2).
... 
```

5.7 Composing modules from other modules

The predicates in this section are intended to create new modules from the content of other modules. Below is an example to define a composite module. The example exports all public predicates of module_1, module_2 and module_3, pred/1 from module_4, all predicates from module_5 except do_not_use/1 and all predicates from module_6 while renaming pred/1 into mypred/1.

```
:- module(my_composite, []).
:- reexport([ module_1,
               module_2,
               module_3
            ]).
:- reexport(module_4, [ pred/1 ]).
:- reexport(module_5, except([do_not_use/1])).
:- reexport(module_6, except([pred/1 as mypred])).
```

**reexport(+Files)**

Load and import predicates as use_module/1 and re-export all imported predicates. The reexport declarations must immediately follow the module declaration.

**reexport(+File, +Import)**

Import from \text{File} as use_module/2 and re-export the imported predicates. The reexport declarations must immediately follow the module declaration.
5.8 Operators and modules

Operators (section 4.24) are local to modules, where the initial table behaves as if it is copied from the module user (see section 5.10). A specific operator can be disabled inside a module using :- op(0, Type, Name). Inheritance from the public table can be restored using :- op(-1, Type, Name).

In addition to using the op/3 directive, operators can be declared in the module/2 directive as shown below. Such operator declarations are visible inside the module, and importing such a module makes the operators visible in the target module. Exporting operators is typically used by modules that implement sub-languages such as chr (see chapter 7). The example below is copied from the library clpfd.

```prolog
:- module(clpfd, [ op(760, yfx, #<==>),
                   op(750, xfy, #==>),
                   op(750, yfx, #<==),
                   op(740, yfx, #/),
                   ...
                   (#<==>)/2,
                   (#==>)/2,
                   (#<==)/2,
                   (#\)/2,
                   ...
                   ]).
```

5.9 Dynamic importing using import modules

Until now we discussed the public module interface that is, at least to some extent, portable between Prolog implementations with a module system that is derived from Quintus Prolog. The remainder of this chapter describes the underlying mechanisms that can be used to emulate other module systems or implement other code-reuse mechanisms.

In addition to built-in predicates, imported predicates and locally defined predicates, SWI-Prolog modules can also call predicates from its import modules. Each module has a (possibly empty) list of import modules. In the default setup, each new module has a single import module, which is user for all normal user modules and system for all system library modules. Module user imports from system where all built-in predicates reside. These special modules are described in more detail in section 5.10.

The list of import modules can be manipulated and queried using the following predicates, as well as using set_module/1.

import_module(+Module, -Import) [nondet]
True if Module inherits directly from Import. All normal modules only import from user, which imports from system. The predicates add_import_module/3 and delete_import_module/2 can be used to manipulate the import list. See also default_module/2.
5.10 RESERVED MODULES AND USING THE ‘USER’ MODULE

default_module(+Module, -Default)
True if predicates and operators in Default are visible in Module. Modules are returned in the same search order used for predicates and operators. That is, Default is first unified with Module, followed by the depth-first transitive closure of import_module/2.

add_import_module(+Module, +Import, +StartOrEnd)
If Import is not already an import module for Module, add it to this list at the start or end depending on StartOrEnd. See also import_module/2 and delete_import_module/2.

delete_import_module(+Module, +Import)
Delete Import from the list of import modules for Module. Fails silently if Import is not in the list.

One usage scenario of import modules is to define a module that is a copy of another, but where one or more predicates have an alternative definition.

5.10 Reserved Modules and using the ‘user’ module

As mentioned above, SWI-Prolog contains two special modules. The first one is the module system. This module contains all built-in predicates. Module system has no import module. The second special module is the module user. This module forms the initial working space of the user. Initially it is empty. The import module of module user is system, making all built-in predicates available.

All other modules import from the module user. This implies they can use all predicates imported into user without explicitly importing them. If an application loads all modules from the user module using use_module/1, one achieves a scoping system similar to the C-language, where every module can access all exported predicates without any special precautions.

5.11 An alternative import/export interface

The use_module/1 predicate from section 5.3 defines import and export relations based on the filename from which a module is loaded. If modules are created differently, such as by asserting predicates into a new module as described in section 5.12, this interface cannot be used. The interface below provides for import/export from modules that are not created using a module file.

export(+PredicateIndicator, …)
Add predicates to the public list of the context module. This implies the predicate will be imported into another module if this module is imported with use_module/[1,2]. Note that predicates are normally exported using the directive module/2. export/1 is meant to handle export from dynamically created modules.

import(+PredicateIndicator, …)
Import predicates PredicateIndicator into the current context module. PredicateIndicator must specify the source module using the ⟨module⟩:(pi) construct. Note that predicates are normally imported using one of the directives use_module/[1,2]. The import/1 alternative is meant for handling imports into dynamically created modules. See also export/1 and export_list/2.
5.12 Dynamic Modules

So far, we discussed modules that were created by loading a module file. These modules have been introduced to facilitate the development of large applications. The modules are fully defined at load-time of the application and normally will not change during execution. Having the notion of a set of predicates as a self-contained world can be attractive for other purposes as well. For example, assume an application that can reason about multiple worlds. It is attractive to store the data of a particular world in a module, so we extract information from a world simply by invoking goals in this world.

Dynamic modules can easily be created. Any built-in predicate that tries to locate a predicate in a specific module will create this module as a side-effect if it did not yet exist. For example:

?– assert(world_a:consistent),
    world_a:set_prolog_flag(unknown, fail).

These calls create a module called ‘world_a’ and make the call ‘world_a:consistent’ succeed. Undefined predicates will not raise an exception for this module (see unknown).

Import and export from a dynamically created world can be achieved using import/1 and export/1 or by specifying the import module as described in section 5.9.

?– world_b:export(solve/2). % exports solve/2 from world_b
?– world_c:import(world_b:solve/2). % and import it to world_c

5.13 Transparent predicates: definition and context module

The ‘module-transparent’ mechanism is still underlying the actual implementation. Direct usage by programmers is deprecated. Please use meta.predicate/1 to deal with meta-predicates.

The qualification of module-sensitive arguments described in section 5.4 is realised using transparent predicates. It is now deprecated to use this mechanism directly. However, studying the underlying mechanism helps to understand SWI-Prolog’s modules. In some respect, the transparent mechanism is more powerful than meta-predicate declarations.

Each predicate of the program is assigned a module, called its definition module. The definition module of a predicate is always the module in which the predicate was originally defined. Each active goal in the Prolog system has a context module assigned to it.

The context module is used to find predicates for a Prolog term. By default, the context module is the definition module of the predicate running the goal. For transparent predicates, however, this is the context module of the goal inherited from the parent goal. Below, we implement maplist/3 using the transparent mechanism. The code of maplist/3 and maplist_/3 is the same as in section 5.4, but now we must declare both the main predicate and the helper as transparent to avoid changing the context module when calling the helper.

:- module(maplist, maplist/3).

:- module_transparent
    maplist/3,
    maplist_/3.
maplist(Goal, L1, L2) :-
    maplist_(L1, L2, G).

maplist_([], [], _).
maplist_([H0|T0], [H|T], Goal) :-
    call(Goal, H0, H),
    maplist_(T0, T, Goal).

Note that any call that translates terms into predicates is subject to the transparent mechanism, not just the terms passed to module-sensitive arguments. For example, the module below counts the number of unique atoms returned as bindings for a variable. It works as expected. If we use the directive :- module_transparent count_atom_results/3. instead, atom_result/2 is called wrongly in the module calling count_atom_results/3. This can be solved using strip_module/3 to create a qualified goal and a non-transparent helper predicate that is defined in the same module.

:- module(count_atom_results,
    [ count_atom_results/3
    ]).
:- meta_predicate count_atom_results(-,0,-).

count_atom_results(A, Goal, Count) :-
    setof(A, atom_result(A, Goal), As), !,
    length(As, Count).
count_atom_results(_, _, 0).

atom_result(Var, Goal) :-
    call(Goal),
    atom(Var).

The following predicates support the module-transparent interface:

:- module_transparent(+Preds)

Preds is a comma-separated list of name/arity pairs (like dynamic/1). Each goal associated with a transparent-declared predicate will inherit the context module from its parent goal.

context_module(-Module)

Unify Module with the context module of the current goal. context_module/1 itself is, of course, transparent.

strip_module(+Term, -Module, -Plain)

Used in module-transparent predicates or meta-predicates to extract the referenced module and plain term. If Term is a module-qualified term, i.e. of the format Module:Plain, Module and Plain are unified to these values. Otherwise, Plain is unified to Term and Module to the context module.
5.14 Module properties

The following predicates can be used to query the module system for reflexive programming:

`current_module(?Module)`

True if `Module` is a currently defined module. This predicate enumerates all modules, whether loaded from a file or created dynamically. Note that modules cannot be destroyed in the current version of SWI-Prolog.

`module_property(?Module, ?Property)`

True if `Property` is a property of `Module`. Defined properties are:

- `class(-Class)`
  True when `Class` is the class of the module. Defined classes are
  - `user` Default for user-defined modules.
  - `system` Module system and modules from ⟨home⟩/boot.
  - `library` Other modules from the system directories.
  - `test` Modules that create tests.
  - `development` Modules that only support the development environment.

- `file(?File)`
  True if `Module` was loaded from `File`.

- `line_count(-Line)`
  True if `Module` was loaded from the N-th line of file.

- `exports(-ListofPredicateIndicators)`
  True if `Module` exports the given predicates. Predicate indicators are in canonical form (i.e., always using name/arity and never the DCG form name//arity). Future versions may also use the DCG form and include public operators. See also `predicate_property/2`.

- `exported_operators(-ListofOperators)`
  True if `Module` exports the given operators. Each exported operator is represented as a term `op(Pri,Assoc,Name)`.

`set_module(:Property)`

Modify properties of the module. Currently, the following properties may be modified:

- `base(+Base)`
  Set the default import module of the current module to `Module`. Typically, `Module` is one of `user` or `system`. See section 5.9.

- `class(+Class)`
  Set the class of the module. See `module_property/2`.
5.15 Compatibility of the Module System

The SWI-Prolog module system is largely derived from the Quintus Prolog module system, which is also adopted by SICStus, Ciao and YAP. Originally, the mechanism for defining meta-predicates in SWI-Prolog was based on the `module_transparent/1` directive and `strip_module/3`. Since 5.7.4 it supports the de-facto standard `meta_predicate/1` directive for implementing meta-predicates, providing much better compatibility.

The support for the `meta_predicate/1` mechanism, however, is considerably different. On most systems, the caller of a meta-predicate is compiled differently to provide the required `<module>:<term>` qualification. This implies that the meta-declaration must be available to the compiler when compiling code that calls a meta-predicate. In practice, this implies that other systems pose the following restrictions on meta-predicates:

- Modules that provide meta-predicates for a module to be compiled must be loaded explicitly by that module.
- The meta-predicate directives of exported predicates must follow the `module/2` directive immediately.
- After changing a meta-declaration, all modules that call the modified predicates need to be recompiled.

In SWI-Prolog, meta-predicates are also `module-transparent`, and qualifying the module-sensitive arguments is done inside the meta-predicate. As a result, the caller need not be aware that it is calling a meta-predicate and none of the above restrictions hold for SWI-Prolog. However, code that aims at portability must obey the above rules.

Other differences are listed below.

- If a module does not define a predicate, it is searched for in the `import modules`. By default, the import module of any user-defined module is the `user` module. In turn, the `user` module imports from the module `system` that provides all built-in predicates. The auto-import hierarchy can be changed using `add_import_module/3` and `delete_import_module/2`.

  This mechanism can be used to realise a simple object-oriented system or a hierarchical module system.

- Operator declarations are local to a module and may be exported. In Quintus and SICStus all operators are global. YAP and Ciao also use local operators. SWI-Prolog provides global operator declarations from within a module by explicitly qualifying the operator name with the `user` module. I.e., operators are inherited from the `import modules` (see above).

```
:- op(precedence, type, user:(operatorname)).
```
This chapter deals with extensions primarily designed to support constraint logic programming (CLP). The low-level attributed variable interface defined in section 6.1 is not intended for the typical Prolog programmer. Instead, the typical Prolog programmer should use the coroutining predicates and the various constraint solvers built on top of attributed variables. CHR (chapter 7) provides a general purpose constraint handling language.

As a rule of thumb, constraint programming reduces the search space by reordering goals and joining goals based on domain knowledge. A typical example is constraint reasoning over integer domains. Plain Prolog has no efficient means to deal with (integer) $\text{X} > 0$ and $\text{X} < 3$. At best it could translate $\text{X} > 0$ with uninstantiated $\text{X}$ to $\text{between}(1, \text{infinite}, \text{X})$ and a similar primitive for $\text{X} < 3$. If the two are combined it has no choice but to generate and test over this infinite two-dimensional space. Instead, a constraint system will delay an uninstantiated goal to $\text{X} > 0$. If, later, it finds a value for $\text{X}$ it will execute the test. If it finds $\text{X} < 3$ it will combine this knowledge to infer that $\text{X}$ is in $1..2$ (see below). If it never finds a concrete value for $\text{X}$ it can be asked to label $\text{X}$ and produce 1 and 2 on backtracking. See section A.7.

1 ?- [library(clpfd)].
... true.
2 ?- X #> 0, X #< 3.
X in 1..2.

Using constraints generally makes your program more declarative. There are some caveats though:

- Constraints and cuts do not merge well. A cut after a goal that is delayed prunes the search space before the condition is true.

- Term-copying operations (assert/1, retract/2, findall/3, copy_term/2, etc.) generally also copy constraints. The effect varies from ok, silent copying of huge constraint networks to violations of the internal consistency of constraint networks. As a rule of thumb, copying terms holding attributes must be deprecated.

6.1 Attributed variables

Attributed variables provide a technique for extending the Prolog unification algorithm [Holzbaur, 1992] by hooking the binding of attributed variables. There is no consensus in the Prolog community on the exact definition and interface to attributed variables. The SWI-Prolog interface
is identical to the one realised by Bart Demoen for hProlog [Demen, 2002]. This interface is simple and available on all Prolog systems that can run the Leuven CHR system (see chapter 7 and the Leuven CHR page).

Binding an attributed variable schedules a goal to be executed at the first possible opportunity. In the current implementation the hooks are executed immediately after a successful unification of the clause-head or successful completion of a foreign language (built-in) predicate. Each attribute is associated to a module, and the hook (attr_unify_hook/2) is executed in this module. The example below realises a very simple and incomplete finite domain reasoner:

```prolog
:- module(domain, [
        domain/2 % Var, ?Domain
    ]).
:- use_module(library(ordsets)).

domain(X, Dom) :-
    var(Dom), !,
    get_attr(X, domain, Dom).
domain(X, List) :-
    list_to_ord_set(List, Domain),
    put_attr(Y, domain, Domain),
    X = Y.

% An attributed variable with attribute value Domain has been assigned the value Y
attr_unify_hook(Domain, Y) :-
    ( get_attr(Y, domain, Dom2)
     -> ord_intersection(Domain, Dom2, NewDomain),
        ( NewDomain == []
         -> fail
        ;   NewDomain = [Value]
         -> Y = Value
        ;   put_attr(Y, domain, NewDomain)
        )
    ;   var(Y)
     -> put_attr(Y, domain, Domain)
    ;   ord_memberchk(Y, Domain)
    ).

% Translate attributes from this module to residual goals
attribute_goals(X) -->
    { get_attr(X, domain, List) },
    [domain(X, List)].
```

Before explaining the code we give some example queries:
?- domain(X, [a,b]), X = c fail
?- domain(X, [a,b]), domain(X, [a,c]). X = a
?- domain(X, [a,b,c]), domain(X, [a,c]). domain(X, [a, c])

The predicate domain/2 fetches (first clause) or assigns (second clause) the variable a domain, a set of values the variable can be unified with. In the second clause, domain/2 first associates the domain with a fresh variable (Y) and then unifies X to this variable to deal with the possibility that X already has a domain. The predicate attr_unify_hook/2 (see below) is a hook called after a variable with a domain is assigned a value. In the simple case where the variable is bound to a concrete value, we simply check whether this value is in the domain. Otherwise we take the intersection of the domains and either fail if the intersection is empty (first example), assign the value if there is only one value in the intersection (second example), or assign the intersection as the new domain of the variable (third example). The nonterminal attribute_goals/3 is used to translate remaining attributes to user-readable goals that, when executed, reinstate these attributes.

6.1.1 Attribute manipulation predicates

attvar(@Term)
Succeeds if Term is an attributed variable. Note that var/1 also succeeds on attributed variables. Attributed variables are created with put_attr/3.

put_attr(+Var, +Module, +Value)
If Var is a variable or attributed variable, set the value for the attribute named Module to Value. If an attribute with this name is already associated with Var, the old value is replaced. Backtracking will restore the old value (i.e., an attribute is a mutable term; see also setarg/3). This predicate raises a representation error if Var is not a variable and a type error if Module is not an atom.

get_attr(+Var, +Module, -Value)
Request the current value for the attribute named Module. If Var is not an attributed variable or the named attribute is not associated to Var this predicate fails silently. If Module is not an atom, a type error is raised.

del_attr(+Var, +Module)
Delete the named attribute. If Var loses its last attribute it is transformed back into a traditional Prolog variable. If Module is not an atom, a type error is raised. In all other cases this predicate succeeds regardless of whether or not the named attribute is present.

6.1.2 Attributed variable hooks

Attribute names are linked to modules. This means that certain operations on attributed variables cause hooks to be called in the module whose name matches the attribute name.

attr_unify_hook(+AttValue, +VarValue)
A hook that must be defined in the module to which an attributed variable refers. It is called after the attributed variable has been unified with a non-var term, possibly another attributed variable. AttValue is the attribute that was associated to the variable in this module and VarValue is the new value of the variable. Normally this predicate fails to veto binding the variable to VarValue, forcing backtracking to undo the binding. If VarValue is another attributed variable
the hook often combines the two attributes and associates the combined attribute with \textit{VarValue} using \texttt{put_attr}/3.

\texttt{attr_portray_hook(+AttValue, +Var)}

Called by \texttt{write_term/2} and friends for each attribute if the option \texttt{attributes(portray)} is in effect. If the hook succeeds the attribute is considered printed. Otherwise \texttt{Module = ...} is printed to indicate the existence of a variable. New infrastructure dealing with communicating attribute values must be based on \texttt{copy_term/3} and its hook \texttt{attribute_goals//1}.

\texttt{attribute_goals(+Var) //}

This nonterminal, if it is defined in a module, is used by \texttt{copy_term/3} to project attributes of that module to residual goals. It is also used by the toplevel to obtain residual goals after executing a query.

6.1.3 Operations on terms with attributed variables

\texttt{copy_term(+Term, -Copy, -Gs)}

Create a regular term \textit{Copy} as a copy of \textit{Term} (without any attributes), and a list \textit{Gs} of goals that represents the attributes. The goal \texttt{maplist(call,Gs)} recreates the attributes for \textit{Copy}. The nonterminal \texttt{attribute_goals//1}, as defined in the modules the attributes stem from, is used to convert attributes to lists of goals.

This building block is used by the toplevel to report pending attributes in a portable and understandable fashion. This predicate is the preferred way to reason about and communicate terms with constraints.

\texttt{copy_term_nat(+Term, -Copy)}

As \texttt{copy_term/2}. Attributes, however, are \textit{not} copied but replaced by fresh variables.

\texttt{term_attvars(+Term, -AttVars)}

\textit{AttVars} is a list of all attributed variables in \textit{Term} and its attributes. That is, \texttt{term_attvars/2} works recursively through attributes. This predicate is cycle-safe. The goal \texttt{term_attvars(Term, [])} in an efficient test that \textit{Term} has \textit{no} attributes; scanning the term is aborted after the first attributed variable is found.

6.1.4 Special purpose predicates for attributes

Normal user code should deal with \texttt{put_attr/3, get_attr/3} and \texttt{del_attr/2}. The routines in this section fetch or set the entire attribute list of a variable. Use of these predicates is anticipated to be restricted to printing and other special purpose operations.

\texttt{getattrs(+Var, -Attributes)}

Get all attributes of \textit{Var}. \textit{Attributes} is a term of the form \texttt{att(Module, Value, MoreAttributes)}, where \textit{MoreAttributes} is \texttt{[]} for the last attribute.

\texttt{putattrs(+Var, -Attributes)}

Set all attributes of \textit{Var}. See \texttt{getattrs/2} for a description of \textit{Attributes}.
del_attrs(+Var)
If Var is an attributed variable, delete all its attributes. In all other cases, this predicate succeeds without side-effects.

6.2 Coroutining

Coroutining deals with having Prolog goals scheduled for execution as soon as some conditions are fulfilled. In Prolog the most commonly used condition is the instantiation (binding) of a variable. Scheduling a goal to execute immediately after a variable is bound can be used to avoid instantiation errors for some built-in predicates (e.g. arithmetic), do work lazy, prevent the binding of a variable to a particular value, etc. Using freeze/2 for example we can define a variable that can only be assigned an even number:

?- freeze(X, X mod 2 =:= 0), X = 3
No

freeze(+Var, :Goal)
Delay the execution of Goal until Var is bound (i.e. is not a variable or attributed variable). If Var is bound on entry freeze/2 is equivalent to call/1. The freeze/2 predicate is realised using an attributed variable associated with the module freeze. Use frozen(Var, Goal) to find out whether and which goals are delayed on Var.

frozen(@Var, -Goal)
Unify Goal with the goal or conjunction of goals delayed on Var. If no goals are frozen on Var, Goal is unified to true.

when(@Condition, :Goal)
Execute Goal when Condition becomes true. Condition is one of ==(X, Y), nonvar(X), ground(X), ,(Cond1, Cond2) or ;(Cond1, Cond2). See also freeze/2 and dif/2. The implementation can deal with cyclic terms in X and Y.

The when/2 predicate is realised using attributed variables associated with the module when. It is defined in the autoload library when.

dif(@A, @B)
The dif/2 predicate provides a constraint stating that A and B are different terms. If A and B can never unify, dif/2 succeeds deterministically. If A and B are identical it fails immediately, and finally, if A and B can unify, goals are delayed that prevent A and B to become equal. The dif/2 predicate behaves as if defined by dif(X, Y) :- when(==(X, Y), X \== Y). See also ==/2. The implementation can deal with cyclic terms.

The dif/2 predicate is realised using attributed variables associated with the module dif. It is defined in the autoload library dif.

call_residue_vars(-Goal, -Vars)
Find residual attributed variables left by Goal. This predicate is intended for debugging programs using coroutining or constraints. Consider a program that poses contradicting constraints
on a variable. Such programs should fail, but sometimes succeed because the constraint solver is too weak to detect the contradiction. Ideally, delayed goals and constraints are all executed at the end of the computation. The meta predicate call_residue_vars/2 finds variables that are given attribute variables or whose attributes are modified\(^1\) by Goal, regardless of whether or not these variables are reachable from the arguments of Goal.

The predicate has considerable implications. During the execution of Goal, the garbage collector does not reclaim attributed variables. This causes some degradation of GC performance. In a well-behaved program there are no such variables, so the space impact is generally minimal. The actual collection of Vars is implemented using a scan of the trail and global stacks.

### 6.3 Global variables

Global variables are associations between names (atoms) and terms. They differ in various ways from storing information using assert/1 or recorda/3.

- The value lives on the Prolog (global) stack. This implies that lookup time is independent of the size of the term. This is particularly interesting for large data structures such as parsed XML documents or the CHR global constraint store.

- They support both global assignment using nb_setval/2 and backtrackable assignment using b_setval/2.

- Only one value (which can be an arbitrary complex Prolog term) can be associated to a variable at a time.

- Their value cannot be shared among threads. Each thread has its own namespace and values for global variables.

- Currently global variables are scoped globally. We may consider module scoping in future versions.

Both b_setval/2 and nb_setval/2 implicitly create a variable if the referenced name does not already refer to a variable.

Global variables may be initialised from directives to make them available during the program lifetime, but some considerations are necessary for saved states and threads. Saved states do not store global variables, which implies they have to be declared with initialization/1 to recreate them after loading the saved state. Each thread has its own set of global variables, starting with an empty set. Using thread_initialization/1 to define a global variable it will be defined, restored after reloading a saved state and created in all threads that are created after the registration. Finally, global variables can be initialised using the exception hook exception/3. The latter technique is used by CHR (see chapter 7).

\`\`b_setval(+Name, +Value)\`

Associate the term Value with the atom Name or replace the currently associated value with Value. If Name does not refer to an existing global variable, a variable with initial value [ ] is created (the empty list). On backtracking the assignment is reversed.

\(^1\)Tracking modifications is currently not complete and this feature may be dropped completely in future versions.
b_getval(+Name, -Value)
Get the value associated with the global variable Name and unify it with Value. Note that this
unification may further instantiate the value of the global variable. If this is undesirable the
normal precautions (double negation or copy_term/2) must be taken. The b_getval/2
predicate generates errors if Name is not an atom or the requested variable does not exist.

nb_setval(+Name, +Value)
Associates a copy of Value created with duplicate_term/2 with the atom Name. Note that
this can be used to set an initial value other than [] prior to backtrackable assignment.

nb_getval(+Name, -Value)
The nb_getval/2 predicate is a synonym for b_getval/2, introduced for compatibility
and symmetry. As most scenarios will use a particular global variable using either non-
backtrackable or backtrackable assignment, using nb_getval/2 can be used to document
that the variable is non-backtrackable.

nb_linkval(+Name, +Value)
Associates the term Value with the atom Name without copying it. This is a fast special-
purpose variation of nb_setval/2 intended for expert users only because the semantics on
backtracking to a point before creating the link are poorly defined for compound terms.
The principal term is always left untouched, but backtracking behaviour on arguments is undone if
the original assignment was trailed and left alone otherwise, which implies that the history that
created the term affects the behaviour on backtracking. Consider the following example:

```prolog
demo_nb_linkval :-
    T = nice(N),
    ( N = world,
        nb_linkval(myvar, T),
        fail
    ; nb_getval(myvar, V),
        writeln(V)
    ).
```

nb_current(?Name, ?Value)
Enumerate all defined variables with their value. The order of enumeration is undefined.

nb_delete(+Name)
Delete the named global variable.

6.3.1 Compatibility of SWI-Prolog Global Variables

Global variables have been introduced by various Prolog implementations recently. The implementa-
tion of them in SWI-Prolog is based on hProlog by Bart Demoen. In discussion with Bart it was
decided that the semantics of hProlog nb_setval/2, which is equivalent to nb_linkval/2, is
not acceptable for normal Prolog users as the behaviour is influenced by how built-in predicates that
construct terms (read/1, =/2, etc.) are implemented.

GNU-Prolog provides a rich set of global variables, including arrays. Arrays can be implemented
easily in SWI-Prolog using functor/3 and setarg/3 due to the unrestricted arity of compound terms.
This chapter is written by Tom Schrijvers, K.U. Leuven, and adjustments by Jan Wielemaker.

The CHR system of SWI-Prolog is the \textit{K.U.Leuven CHR system}. The runtime environment is written by Christian Holzbaur and Tom Schrijvers while the compiler is written by Tom Schrijvers. Both are integrated with SWI-Prolog and licensed under compatible conditions with permission from the authors.

The main reference for the K.U.Leuven CHR system is:


On the K.U.Leuven CHR website (http://dtai.cs.kuleuven.be/CHR/) you can find more related papers, references and example programs.

\section{Introduction}

Constraint Handling Rules (CHR) is a committed-choice rule-based language embedded in Prolog. It is designed for writing constraint solvers and is particularly useful for providing application-specific constraints. It has been used in many kinds of applications, like scheduling, model checking, abduction, and type checking, among many others.

CHR has previously been implemented in other Prolog systems (SICStus, Eclipse, Yap), Haskell and Java. This CHR system is based on the compilation scheme and runtime environment of CHR in SICStus.

In this documentation we restrict ourselves to giving a short overview of CHR in general and mainly focus on elements specific to this implementation. For a more thorough review of CHR we refer the reader to [Frühwirth, 2009]. More background on CHR can be found at [Frühwirth, ].

In section \ref{sec:syntax} we present the syntax of CHR in Prolog and explain informally its operational semantics. Next, section \ref{sec:practical} deals with practical issues of writing and compiling Prolog programs containing CHR. Section \ref{sec:debugging} explains the (currently primitive) CHR debugging facilities. Section \ref{sec:inspecting} provides a few useful predicates to inspect the constraint store, and section \ref{sec:compatibility} illustrates CHR with two example programs. Section \ref{sec:compatibility} describes some compatibility issues with older versions of this system and SICStus’ CHR system. Finally, section \ref{sec:practical} concludes with a few practical guidelines for using CHR.
7.2 Syntax and Semantics

7.2.1 Syntax of CHR rules

Note that the guard of a rule may not contain any goal that binds a variable in the head of the rule with a non-variable or with another variable in the head of the rule. It may, however, bind variables that do not appear in the head of the rule, e.g. an auxiliary variable introduced in the guard.
7.2. SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS

7.2.2 Semantics

In this subsection the operational semantics of CHR in Prolog are presented informally. They do not differ essentially from other CHR systems.

When a constraint is called, it is considered an active constraint and the system will try to apply the rules to it. Rules are tried and executed sequentially in the order they are written.

A rule is conceptually tried for an active constraint in the following way. The active constraint is matched with a constraint in the head of the rule. If more constraints appear in the head, they are looked for among the suspended constraints, which are called passive constraints in this context. If the necessary passive constraints can be found and all match with the head of the rule and the guard of the rule succeeds, then the rule is committed and the body of the rule executed. If not all the necessary passive constraints can be found, or the matching or the guard fails, then the body is not executed and the process of trying and executing simply continues with the following rules. If for a rule there are multiple constraints in the head, the active constraint will try the rule sequentially multiple times, each time trying to match with another constraint.

This process ends either when the active constraint disappears, i.e. it is removed by some rule, or after the last rule has been processed. In the latter case the active constraint becomes suspended.

A suspended constraint is eligible as a passive constraint for an active constraint. The other way it may interact again with the rules is when a variable appearing in the constraint becomes bound to either a non-variable or another variable involved in one or more constraints. In that case the constraint is triggered, i.e. it becomes an active constraint and all the rules are tried.

Rule Types There are three different kinds of rules, each with its specific semantics:

- simplification
  The simplification rule removes the constraints in its head and calls its body.

- propagation
  The propagation rule calls its body exactly once for the constraints in its head.

- simpagation
  The simpagation rule removes the constraints in its head after the \ and then calls its body. It is an optimization of simplification rules of the form:

  \[ constraints_1, constraints_2 \leq \rightarrow constraints_1, body \]

  Namely, in the simpagation form:

  \[ constraints_1 \backslash constraints_2 \leq \rightarrow body \]

  The \[ constraints_1 \] constraints are not called in the body.

Rule Names Naming a rule is optional and has no semantic meaning. It only functions as documentation for the programmer.

Pragmas The semantics of the pragmas are:

- passive(Identifier)
  The constraint in the head of a rule Identifier can only match a passive constraint in that rule. There is an abbreviated syntax for this pragma. Instead of:

  \[ \text{passive(Identifier)} \]

  It is:
..., c # Id, ... <=> ... pragma passive(Id)

you can also write

..., c # passive, ... <=> ...

Additional pragmas may be released in the future.

:- chr_option(+Option, +Value)

It is possible to specify options that apply to all the CHR rules in the module. Options are specified with the chr_option/2 declaration:

:- chr_option(Option,Value).

and may appear in the file anywhere after the first constraints declaration.

Available options are:

check_guard_bindings
This option controls whether guards should be checked for (illegal) variable bindings or not. Possible values for this option are on to enable the checks, and off to disable the checks. If this option is on, any guard fails when it binds a variable that appears in the head of the rule. When the option is off (default), the behavior of a binding in the guard is undefined.

optimize
This option controls the degree of optimization. Possible values are full to enable all available optimizations, and off (default) to disable all optimizations. The default is derived from the SWI-Prolog flag optimise, where true is mapped to full. Therefore the command-line option -O provides full CHR optimization. If optimization is enabled, debugging must be disabled.

depth
This option enables or disables the possibility to debug the CHR code. Possible values are on (default) and off. See section 7.4 for more details on debugging. The default is derived from the Prolog flag generate_debug_info, which is true by default. See -nodebug. If debugging is enabled, optimization must be disabled.

7.3 CHR in SWI-Prolog Programs

7.3.1 Embedding in Prolog Programs

The CHR constraints defined in a .pl file are associated with a module. The default module is user. One should never load different .pl files with the same CHR module name.
7.3. Constraint declaration

:- chr_constraint(+Specifier)

Every constraint used in CHR rules has to be declared with a chr_constraint/1 declaration by the constraint specifier. For convenience multiple constraints may be declared at once with the same chr_constraint/1 declaration followed by a comma-separated list of constraint specifiers.

A constraint specifier is, in its compact form, \( F/A \) where \( F \) and \( A \) are respectively the functor name and arity of the constraint, e.g.:

```prolog
:- chr_constraint foo/1.
:- chr_constraint bar/2, baz/3.
```

In its extended form, a constraint specifier is \( c(A_1, \ldots, A_n) \) where \( c \) is the constraint’s functor, \( n \) its arity and the \( A_i \) are argument specifiers. An argument specifier is a mode, optionally followed by a type. E.g.

```prolog
:- chr_constraint get_value(+,?).
:- chr_constraint domain(?int, +list(int)),
   alldifferent(?list(int)).
```

Modes  A mode is one of:

- The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint is always unbound.

+ The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint is always ground.

? The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint can have any instantiation, which may change over time. This is the default value.

Types  A type can be a user-defined type or one of the built-in types. A type comprises a (possibly infinite) set of values. The type declaration for a constraint argument means that for every instance of that constraint the corresponding argument is only ever bound to values in that set. It does not state that the argument necessarily has to be bound to a value.

The built-in types are:

int  The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint is an integer number.

dense_int  The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint is an integer that can be used as an array index. Note that if this argument takes values in \([0, n]\), the array takes \( O(n) \) space.

float 
   ...a floating point number.
number
    ... a number.

natural
    ... a positive integer.

any
    The corresponding argument of every occurrence of the constraint can have any type. This is
    the default value.

:- chr_type(+TypeDeclaration)
    User-defined types are algebraic data types, similar to those in Haskell or the discriminated
    unions in Mercury. An algebraic data type is defined using chr_type/1:

    :- chr_type type ---> body.

    If the type term is a functor of arity zero (i.e. one having zero arguments), it names a monomorphic type. Otherwise, it names a polymorphic type; the arguments of the functor must be distinct type variables. The body term is defined as a sequence of constructor definitions separated by semi-colons.

    Each constructor definition must be a functor whose arguments (if any) are types. Discriminated union definitions must be transparent: all type variables occurring in the body must also occur in the type.

    Here are some examples of algebraic data type definitions:

    :- chr_type color ---> red ; blue ; yellow ; green.
    :- chr_type tree ---> empty ; leaf(int) ; branch(tree, tree).
    :- chr_type list(T) ---> [] ; [T | list(T)].
    :- chr_type pair(T1, T2) ---> (T1 - T2).

    Each algebraic data type definition introduces a distinct type. Two algebraic data types that
    have the same bodies are considered to be distinct types (name equivalence).

    Constructors may be overloaded among different types: there may be any number of constructors with a given name and arity, so long as they all have different types.

    Aliases can be defined using ==. For example, if your program uses lists of lists of integers, you can define an alias as follows:

    :- chr_type lli == list(list(int)).
Type Checking  Currently two complementary forms of type checking are performed:

1. Static type checking is always performed by the compiler. It is limited to CHR rule heads and CHR constraint calls in rule bodies.

Two kinds of type error are detected. The first is where a variable has to belong to two types. For example, in the program:

```
:-chr_type foo ---> foo.
:-chr_type bar ---> bar.

:-chr_constraint abc(?foo).
:-chr_constraint def(?bar).

foobar @ abc(X) <= def(X).
```

the variable \( X \) has to be of both type \( \text{foo} \) and \( \text{bar} \). This is reported as a type clash error:

```
CHR compiler ERROR:
  --> Type clash for variable _ in rule foobar:
      expected type foo in body goal def(_, _)
      expected type bar in head def(_, _)
```

The second kind of error is where a functor is used that does not belong to the declared type. For example in:

```
:- chr_type foo ---> foo.
:- chr_type bar ---> bar.

:- chr_constraint abc(?foo).

foo @ abc(bar) <= true.
```

\( \text{bar} \) appears in the head of the rule where something of type \( \text{foo} \) is expected. This is reported as:

```
CHR compiler ERROR:
  --> Invalid functor in head abc(bar) of rule foo:
      found 'bar',
      expected type 'foo'!
```

No runtime overhead is incurred in static type checking.

2. Dynamic type checking checks at runtime, during program execution, whether the arguments of CHR constraints respect their declared types. The when/2 co-routining library is used to delay dynamic type checks until variables are instantiated.

The kind of error detected by dynamic type checking is where a functor is used that does not belong to the declared type. E.g. for the program:

```
:- chr_type foo ---> foo.
:- chr_type bar ---> bar.

:- chr_constraint abc(?foo).

foo @ abc(bar) <= true.
```
we get the following error in an erroneous query:

```
?- abc(bar).
ERROR: Type error: 'foo' expected, found 'bar'
    (CHR Runtime Type Error)
```

Dynamic type checking is weaker than static type checking in the sense that it only checks the particular program execution at hand rather than all possible executions. It is stronger in the sense that it tracks types throughout the whole program.

Note that it is enabled only in debug mode, as it incurs some (minor) runtime overhead.

### 7.3.3 Compilation

The SWI-Prolog CHR compiler exploits `term_expansion/2` rules to translate the constraint handling rules to plain Prolog. These rules are loaded from the library `chr`. They are activated if the compiled file has the `.chr` extension or after finding a declaration in the following format:

```
:- chr_constraint ...
```

It is advised to define CHR rules in a module file, where the module declaration is immediately followed by including the library(chr) library as exemplified below:

```
:- module(zebra, [ zebra/0 ]).
:- use_module(library(chr)).
:- chr_constraint ...
```

Using this style, CHR rules can be defined in ordinary Prolog .pl files and the operator definitions required by CHR do not leak into modules where they might cause conflicts.

### 7.4 Debugging

The CHR debugging facilities are currently rather limited. Only tracing is currently available. To use the CHR debugging facilities for a CHR file it must be compiled for debugging. Generating debug info is controlled by the CHR option `debug`, whose default is derived from the SWI-Prolog flag `generate_debug_info`. Therefore debug info is provided unless the `-nodebug` is used.
7.4. DEBUGGING

7.4.1 Ports

For CHR constraints the four standard ports are defined:

call
  A new constraint is called and becomes active.

exit
  An active constraint exits: it has either been inserted in the store after trying all rules or has been removed from the constraint store.

fail
  An active constraint fails.

redo
  An active constraint starts looking for an alternative solution.

In addition to the above ports, CHR constraints have five additional ports:

wake
  A suspended constraint is woken and becomes active.

insert
  An active constraint has tried all rules and is suspended in the constraint store.

remove
  An active or passive constraint is removed from the constraint store.

try
  An active constraint tries a rule with possibly some passive constraints. The try port is entered just before committing to the rule.

apply
  An active constraint commits to a rule with possibly some passive constraints. The apply port is entered just after committing to the rule.

7.4.2 Tracing

Tracing is enabled with the `chr_trace/0` predicate and disabled with the `chr_notrace/0` predicate.

When enabled the tracer will step through the `call`, `exit`, `fail`, `wake` and `apply` ports, accepting debug commands, and simply write out the other ports.

The following debug commands are currently supported:

CHR debug options:

```
<cr>  creep       c  creep
s     skip
g     ancestors
n     nodebug
b     break
```
a    abort
f    fail
?    help      h    help

Their meaning is:

creep
   Step to the next port.

skip
   Skip to exit port of this call or wake port.

ancestors
   Print list of ancestor call and wake ports.

nodebug
   Disable the tracer.

break
   Enter a recursive Prolog top-level. See break/0.

abort
   Exit to the top-level. See abort/0.

fail
   Insert failure in execution.

help
   Print the above available debug options.

7.4.3 CHR Debugging Predicates

The chr module contains several predicates that allow inspecting and printing the content of the constraint store.

chr_trace
   Activate the CHR tracer. By default the CHR tracer is activated and deactivated automatically by the Prolog predicates trace/0 and notrace/0.

chr_notrace
   Deactivate the CHR tracer. By default the CHR tracer is activated and deactivated automatically by the Prolog predicates trace/0 and notrace/0.

chr_leash(+Spec)
   Define the set of CHR ports on which the CHR tracer asks for user intervention (i.e. stops). Spec is either a list of ports as defined in section 7.4.1 or a predefined ‘alias’. Defined aliases are: full to stop at all ports, none or off to never stop, and default to stop at the call, exit, fail, wake and apply ports. See also leash/1.
7.5. EXAMPLES

- **chr_show_store(+Mod)**
  
  Prints all suspended constraints of module *Mod* to the standard output. This predicate is automatically called by the SWI-Prolog top-level at the end of each query for every CHR module currently loaded. The Prolog flag *chr_toplevel_show_store* controls whether the top-level shows the constraint stores. The value *true* enables it. Any other value disables it.

- **find_chr_constraint(-Constraint)**
  
  Returns a constraint in the constraint store. Via backtracking, all constraints in the store can be enumerated.

### 7.5 Examples

Here are two example constraint solvers written in CHR.

- The program below defines a solver with one constraint, `leq/2/`, which is a less-than-or-equal constraint, also known as a partial order constraint.

```prolog
:- module(leq, [leq/2]).
:- use_module(library(chr)).

:- chr_constraint leq/2.
reflexivity @ leq(X,X) <=> true.
antisymmetry @ leq(X,Y), leq(Y,X) <=> X = Y.
idempotence @ leq(X,Y) \ leq(X,Y) <=> true.
transitivity @ leq(X,Y), leq(Y,Z) ==> leq(X,Z).
```

When the above program is saved in a file and loaded in SWI-Prolog, you can call the `leq/2` constraints in a query, e.g.:

```prolog
?- leq(X,Y), leq(Y,Z).
leq(_G23837, _G23841)
leq(_G23838, _G23841)
leq(_G23837, _G23838)
true.
```

When the query succeeds, the SWI-Prolog top-level prints the content of the CHR constraint store and displays the bindings generated during the query. Some of the query variables may have been bound to attributed variables, as you see in the above example.

- The program below implements a simple finite domain constraint solver.

```prolog
:- module(dom, [dom/2]).
:- use_module(library(chr)).

:- chr_constraint dom(?int,+list(int)).
:- chr_type list(T) ---> [] ; [T|list(T)].
```
dom(X,[]) <=> fail.
dom(X,[Y]) <=> X = Y.
dom(X,L) <=> nonvar(X) | memberchk(X,L).
dom(X,L1), dom(X,L2) <=> intersection(L1,L2,L3), dom(X,L3).

When the above program is saved in a file and loaded in SWI-Prolog, you can call the dom/2 constraints in a query, e.g.:

?- dom(A,[1,2,3]), dom(A,[3,4,5]).
A = 3.

7.6 Backwards Compatibility

7.6.1 The Old SICStus CHR implementation

There are small differences between the current K.U.Leuven CHR system in SWI-Prolog, older versions of the same system, and SICStus’ CHR system.

The current system maps old syntactic elements onto new ones and ignores a number of no longer required elements. However, for each a deprecated warning is issued. You are strongly urged to replace or remove deprecated features.

Besides differences in available options and pragmas, the following differences should be noted:

- **The constraints/1 declaration**
  This declaration is deprecated. It has been replaced with the chr_constraint/1 declaration.

- **The option/2 declaration**
  This declaration is deprecated. It has been replaced with the chr_option/2 declaration.

- **The handler/1 declaration**
  In SICStus every CHR module requires a handler/1 declaration declaring a unique handler name. This declaration is valid syntax in SWI-Prolog, but will have no effect. A warning will be given during compilation.

- **The rules/1 declaration**
  In SICStus, for every CHR module it is possible to only enable a subset of the available rules through the rules/1 declaration. The declaration is valid syntax in SWI-Prolog, but has no effect. A warning is given during compilation.

- **Guard bindings**
  The check_guard_bindings option only turns invalid calls to unification into failure. In SICStus this option does more: it intercepts instantiation errors from Prolog built-ins such as is/2 and turns them into failure. In SWI-Prolog, we do not go this far, as we like to separate concerns more. The CHR compiler is aware of the CHR code, the Prolog system, and the programmer should be aware of the appropriate meaning of the Prolog goals used in guards and bodies of CHR rules.
7.7. PROGRAMMING TIPS AND TRICKS

7.6.2 The Old ECLiPSe CHR implementation

The old ECLiPSe CHR implementation features a label_with/1 construct for labeling variables in CHR constraints. This feature has long since been abandoned. However, a simple transformation is all that is required to port the functionality.

\begin{verbatim}
label_with Constraint1 if Condition1.
... label_with ConstraintN if ConditionN.
Constraint1 :- Body1.
... ConstraintN :- BodyN.
\end{verbatim}

is transformed into

\begin{verbatim}
:- chr_constraint my_labeling/0.
my_labeling \ Constraint1 <=> Condition1 | Body1.
... my_labeling \ ConstraintN <=> ConditionN | BodyN.
my_labeling <=> true.
\end{verbatim}

Be sure to put this code after all other rules in your program! With my_labeling/0 (or another predicate name of your choosing) the labeling is initiated, rather than ECLiPSe’s chr_labeling/0.

7.7 Programming Tips and Tricks

In this section we cover several guidelines on how to use CHR to write constraint solvers and how to do so efficiently.

- **Check guard bindings yourself**
  It is considered bad practice to write guards that bind variables of the head and to rely on the system to detect this at runtime. It is inefficient and obscures the working of the program.

- **Set semantics**
  The CHR system allows the presence of identical constraints, i.e. multiple constraints with the same functor, arity and arguments. For most constraint solvers, this is not desirable: it affects efficiency and possibly termination. Hence appropriate simpagation rules should be added of the form:

  \[
  \text{constraint} \backslash \text{constraint} \leftrightarrow \text{true}
  \]

- **Multi-headed rules**
  Multi-headed rules are executed more efficiently when the constraints share one or more variables.

- **Mode and type declarations**
  Provide mode and type declarations to get more efficient program execution. Make sure to disable debug (-nodebug) and enable optimization (-O).
• **Compile once, run many times**
  Does consulting your CHR program take a long time in SWI-Prolog? Probably it takes the CHR compiler a long time to compile the CHR rules into Prolog code. When you disable optimizations the CHR compiler will be a lot quicker, but you may lose performance. Alternatively, you can just use SWI-Prolog’s `qcompile/1` to generate a `.qlf` file once from your `.pl` file. This `.qlf` contains the generated code of the CHR compiler (be it in a binary format). When you consult the `.qlf` file, the CHR compiler is not invoked and consultation is much faster.

• **Finding Constraints**
  The `find_chr_constraint/1` predicate is fairly expensive. Avoid it, if possible. If you must use it, try to use it with an instantiated top-level constraint symbol.

### 7.8 Compiler Errors and Warnings

In this section we summarize the most important error and warning messages of the CHR compiler.

#### 7.8.1 CHR Compiler Errors

**Type clash** for variable ... in rule ...

This error indicates an inconsistency between declared types; a variable can not belong to two types. See static type checking.

**Invalid functor** in head ... of rule ...

This error indicates an inconsistency between a declared type and the use of a functor in a rule. See static type checking.

**Cyclic alias** definition: ... == ...

You have defined a type alias in terms of itself, either directly or indirectly.

**Ambiguous type aliases** You have defined two overlapping type aliases.

**Multiple definitions** for type

You have defined the same type multiple times.

**Non-ground type** in constraint definition: ...

You have declared a non-ground type for a constraint argument.

**Could not find type definition** for ...

You have used an undefined type in a type declaration.

**Illegal mode/type declaration** You have used invalid syntax in a constraint declaration.

**Constraint multiply defined** There is more than one declaration for the same constraint.

**Undeclared constraint** ... in head of ...

You have used an undeclared constraint in the head of a rule. This often indicates a misspelled constraint name or wrong number of arguments.
7.8. COMPILER ERRORS AND WARNINGS

Invalid pragma ... in ... Pragma should not be a variable.
   You have used a variable as a pragma in a rule. This is not allowed.

Invalid identifier ... in pragma passive in ...
   You have used an identifier in a passive pragma that does not correspond to an identifier in the
   head of the rule. Likely the identifier name is misspelled.

Unknown pragma ... in ...
   You have used an unknown pragma in a rule. Likely the pragma is misspelled or not supported.

Something unexpected happened in the CHR compiler
   You have most likely bumped into a bug in the CHR compiler. Please contact Tom Schrijvers
   to notify him of this error.
Multi-threaded applications

SWI-Prolog multithreading is based on standard C-language multithreading support. It is not like ParLog or other parallel implementations of the Prolog language. Prolog threads have their own stacks and only share the Prolog heap: predicates, records, flags and other global non-backtrackable data. SWI-Prolog thread support is designed with the following goals in mind.

- **Multi-threaded server applications**
  Today’s computing services often focus on (internet) server applications. Such applications often need for communication between services and/or fast non-blocking service to multiple concurrent clients. The shared heap provides fast communication, and thread creation is relatively cheap.\(^1\)

- **Interactive applications**
  Interactive applications often need to perform extensive computation. If such computations are executed in a new thread, the main thread can process events and allow the user to cancel the ongoing computation. User interfaces can also use multiple threads, each thread dealing with input from a distinct group of windows. See also section 8.8.

- **Natural integration with foreign code**
  Each Prolog thread runs in a native thread of the operating system, automatically making them cooperate with MT-safe foreign-code. In addition, any foreign thread can create its own Prolog engine for dealing with calling Prolog from C-code.

SWI-Prolog multithreading is based on the POSIX thread standard [Butenhof, 1997] used on most popular systems except for MS-Windows. On Windows it uses the pthread-win32 emulation of POSIX threads mixed with the Windows native API for smoother and faster operation.

### 8.1 Creating and destroying Prolog threads

**thread_create(:Goal, -Id, +Options)**
Create a new Prolog thread (and underlying C-thread) and start it by executing *Goal*. If the thread is created successfully, the thread-identifier of the created thread is unified to *Id*. *Options* is a list of options. The currently defined options are below. Stack size options can also take the value *inf* or *infinite*, which is mapped to the maximum stack size supported by the platform.

**alias(AliasName)**
Associate an ‘alias name’ with the thread. This name may be used to refer to the thread and remains valid until the thread is joined (see *threadjoin/2*).

---
\(^1\)On an Intel i7-2600K, running Ubuntu Linux 12.04, SWI-Prolog 6.2 creates and joins 32,000 threads per second elapsed time.
8.1. CREATING AND DESTROYING PROLOG THREADS

at_exit(:AtExit)

Register AtExit as using thread_at_exit/1 before entering the thread goal. Unlike calling thread_at_exit/1 as part of the normal Goal, this ensures the Goal is called. Using thread_at_exit/1, the thread may be signalled or run out of resources before thread_at_exit/1 is reached.

detached(Bool)

If false (default), the thread can be waited for using thread_join/2. thread_join/2 must be called on this thread to reclaim all resources associated with the thread. If true, the system will reclaim all associated resources automatically after the thread finishes. Please note that thread identifiers are freed for reuse after a detached thread finishes or a normal thread has been joined. See also thread_join/2 and thread_detach/1.

If a detached thread dies due to failure or exception of the initial goal, the thread prints a message using print_message/2. If such termination is considered normal, the code must be wrapped using ignore/1 and/or catch/3 to ensure successful completion.

global(K-Bytes)

Set the limit to which the global stack of this thread may grow. If omitted, the limit of the calling thread is used. See also the -G command-line option.

local(K-Bytes)

Set the limit to which the local stack of this thread may grow. If omitted, the limit of the calling thread is used. See also the -L command-line option.

c_stack(K-Bytes)

Set the limit to which the system stack of this thread may grow. The default, minimum and maximum values are system-dependent.\(^2\).

trail(K-Bytes)

Set the limit to which the trail stack of this thread may grow. If omitted, the limit of the calling thread is used. See also the -T command-line option.

The Goal argument is copied to the new Prolog engine. This implies that further instantiation of this term in either thread does not have consequences for the other thread: Prolog threads do not share data from their stacks.

thread_self(-Id)

Get the Prolog thread identifier of the running thread. If the thread has an alias, the alias name is returned.

thread_join(+Id, -Status)

Wait for the termination of the thread with the given Id. Then unify the result status of the thread with Status. After this call, Id becomes invalid and all resources associated with the thread are reclaimed. Note that threads with the attribute detached(true) cannot be joined. See also thread_property/2.

A thread that has been completed without thread_join/2 being called on it is partly reclaimed: the Prolog stacks are released and the C-thread is destroyed. A small data structure representing the exit status of the thread is retained until thread_join/2 is called on the thread. Defined values for Status are:

\(^2\)Older versions used stack. This is still accepted as a synonym.
true
The goal has been proven successfully.

false
The goal has failed.

exception(Term)
The thread is terminated on an exception. See print_message/2 to turn system exceptions into readable messages.

exited(Term)
The thread is terminated on thread_exit/1 using the argument Term.

thread_detach(+Id)
Switch thread into detached state (see detached(Bool) option at thread_create/3) at runtime. Id is the identifier of the thread placed in detached state. This may be the result of thread_self/1.

One of the possible applications is to simplify debugging. Threads that are created as detached leave no traces if they crash. For non-detached threads the status can be inspected using thread_property/2. Threads nobody is waiting for may be created normally and detach themselves just before completion. This way they leave no traces on normal completion and their reason for failure can be inspected.

thread_exit(+Term) [deprecated]
Terminates the thread immediately, leaving exited(Term) as result state for thread_join/2. If the thread has the attribute detached(true) it terminates, but its exit status cannot be retrieved using thread_join/2, making the value of Term irrelevant. The Prolog stacks and C-thread are reclaimed.

The current implementation does not guarantee proper releasing of all mutexes and proper cleanup in setup_call_cleanup/3, etc. Please use the exception mechanism (throw/1) to abort execution using non-standard control.

thread_initialization(:Goal)
Run Goal when thread is started. This predicate is similar to initialization/1, but is intended for initialization operations of the runtime stacks, such as setting global variables as described in section 6.3. Goal is run on four occasions: at the call to this predicate, after loading a saved state, on starting a new thread and on creating a Prolog engine through the C interface. On loading a saved state, Goal is executed after running the initialization/1 hooks.

thread_at_exit(:Goal)
Run Goal just before releasing the thread resources. This is to be compared to at_halt/1, but only for the current thread. These hooks are run regardless of why the execution of the thread has been completed. When these hooks are run, the return code is already available through thread_property/2 using the result of thread_self/1 as thread identifier. Note that there are two scenarios for using exit hooks. Using thread_at_exit/1 is typically used if the thread creates a side-effect that must be reverted if the thread dies. Another scenario is where the creator of the thread wants to be informed when the thread ends. That cannot be guaranteed by means of thread_at_exit/1 because it is possible that the thread cannot be
8.2. MONITORING THREADS

created or dies almost instantly due to a signal or resource error. The \texttt{at_exit(Goal)} option of \texttt{thread_create/3} is designed to deal with this scenario.

\textbf{thread_setconcurrency(Old, +New)}

Determine the concurrency of the process, which is defined as the maximum number of concurrently active threads. ‘Active’ here means they are using CPU time. This option is provided if the thread implementation provides \texttt{pthread_setconcurrency()}. Solaris is a typical example of this family. On other systems this predicate unifies \textit{Old} to 0 (zero) and succeeds silently.

8.2 Monitoring threads

Normal multithreaded applications should not need the predicates from this section because almost any usage of these predicates is unsafe. For example checking the existence of a thread before signalling it is of no use as it may vanish between the two calls. Catching exceptions using \texttt{catch/3} is the only safe way to deal with thread-existence errors.

These predicates are provided for diagnosis and monitoring tasks. See also section 8.5, describing more high-level primitives.

\textbf{thread_property(Id, Property)}

True if thread \textit{Id} has \textit{Property}. Either or both arguments may be unbound, enumerating all relations on backtracking. Calling \texttt{thread_property/2} does not influence any thread. See also \texttt{thread_join/2}. For threads that have an alias name, this name is returned in \textit{Id} instead of the opaque thread identifier. Defined properties are:

\textbf{alias(Alias)}

\textit{Alias} is the alias name of thread \textit{Id}.

\textbf{detached(Boolean)}

Current detached status of the thread.

\textbf{status(Status)}

Current status of the thread. \textit{Status} is one of:

\textbf{running}

The thread is running. This is the initial status of a thread. Please note that threads waiting for something are considered running too.

\textbf{false}

The \textit{Goal} of the thread has been completed and failed.

\textbf{true}

The \textit{Goal} of the thread has been completed and succeeded.

\textbf{exited(Term)}

The \textit{Goal} of the thread has been terminated using \texttt{thread_exit/1} with \textit{Term} as argument. If the underlying native thread has exited (using \texttt{pthread_exit()}) \textit{Term} is unbound.

\textbf{exception(Term)}

The \textit{Goal} of the thread has been terminated due to an uncaught exception (see \texttt{throw/1} and \texttt{catch/3}).
See also thread_statistics/3 to obtain resource usage information and message_queue_property/2 to get the number of queued messages for a thread.

\textbf{thread\_statistics(+Id, +Key, -Value)}

Obtains statistical information on thread \textit{Id} as \textit{statistics/2} does in single-threaded applications. This call supports all keys of \textit{statistics/2}, although only stack sizes and CPU time yield different values for each thread.\(^3\)

\textbf{mutex\_statistics}

Print usage statistics on internal mutexes and mutexes associated with dynamic predicates. For each mutex two numbers are printed: the number of times the mutex was acquired and the number of \textit{collisions}: the number of times the calling thread has to wait for the mutex. Generally collision count is close to zero on single-CPU hardware.

\section{Thread communication}

\subsection{Message queues}

Prolog threads can exchange data using dynamic predicates, database records, and other globally shared data. These provide no suitable means to wait for data or a condition as they can only be checked in an expensive polling loop. \textit{Message queues} provide a means for threads to wait for data or conditions without using the CPU.

Each thread has a message queue attached to it that is identified by the thread. Additional queues are created using \textit{message\_queue\_create/1}.

\textbf{thread\_send\_message(+QueueOrThreadId, +Term)}

Place \textit{Term} in the given queue or default queue of the indicated thread (which can even be the message queue of itself, see \textit{thread\_self/1}). Any term can be placed in a message queue, but note that the term is copied to the receiving thread and variable bindings are thus lost. This call returns immediately.

If more than one thread is waiting for messages on the given queue and at least one of these is waiting with a partially instantiated \textit{Term}, the waiting threads are all sent a wake-up signal, starting a rush for the available messages in the queue. This behaviour can seriously harm performance with many threads waiting on the same queue as all-but-the-winner perform a useless scan of the queue. If there is only one waiting thread or all waiting threads wait with an unbound variable, an arbitrary thread is restarted to scan the queue.\(^4\)

\textbf{thread\_get\_message(?Term)}

Examines the thread message queue and if necessary blocks execution until a term that unifies to \textit{Term} arrives in the queue. After a term from the queue has been unified to \textit{Term}, the term is deleted from the queue.

Please note that non-unifying messages remain in the queue. After the following has been executed, thread 1 has the term \texttt{b(gnu)} in its queue and continues execution using \texttt{A = gnat}.\(^3\)

\(^3\)There is no portable interface to obtain thread-specific CPU time and some operating systems provide no access to this information at all. On such systems the total process CPU is returned. Thread CPU time is supported on MS-Windows, Linux and MacOSX.

\(^4\)See the documentation for the POSIX thread functions \texttt{pthread\_cond\_signal()} \textit{v.s.} \texttt{pthread\_cond\_broadcast()} for background information.
8.3. THREAD COMMUNICATION

See also thread_peek_message/1.

**thread_peek_message(?Term)**
Examines the thread message queue and compares the queued terms with Term until one unifies or the end of the queue has been reached. In the first case the call succeeds, possibly instantiating Term. If no term from the queue unifies, this call fails. I.e., thread_peek_message/1 never waits and does not remove any term from the queue. See also thread_get_message/3.

**message_queue_create(?Queue)**
If Queue is an atom, create a named queue. To avoid ambiguity of thread_send_message/2, the name of a queue may not be in use as a thread name. If Queue is unbound an anonymous queue is created and Queue is unified to its identifier.

**message_queue_create(-Queue, +Options)**
Create a message queue from Options. Defined options are:

- **alias(+Alias)**
  Same as message_queue_create(Alias), but according to the ISO draft on Prolog threads.

- **max_size(+Size)**
  Maximum number of terms in the queue. If this number is reached, thread_send_message/2 will suspend until the queue is drained. The option can be used if the source, sending messages to the queue, is faster than the drain, consuming the messages.

**message_queue_destroy(+Queue)**
[det]
Destroy a message queue created with message_queue_create/1. A permission error is raised if Queue refers to (the default queue of) a thread. Other threads that are waiting for Queue using thread_get_message/2 receive an existence error.

**thread_get_message(+Queue, ?Term)**
[det]
As thread_get_message/1, operating on a given queue. It is allowed (but not advised) to get messages from the queue of other threads. This predicate raises an existence error exception if Queue doesn’t exist or is destroyed using message_queue_destroy/1 while this predicate is waiting.

**thread_get_message(+Queue, ?Term, +Options)**
[semidet]
As thread_get_message/2, but providing additional Options:
**deadline**(\(+\text{AbsTime}\))

The call fails (silently) if no message has arrived before \textit{AbsTime}. See \texttt{get\_time/1} for the representation of absolute time. If \textit{AbsTime} is earlier then the current time, \texttt{thread\_get\_message/3} fails immediately. Both resolution and maximum wait time is platform-dependent.\(^5\)

**timeout**(\(+\text{Time}\))

\textit{Time} is a float or integer and specifies the maximum time to wait in seconds. This is a relative-time version of the \texttt{deadline} option. If both options are provided, the earliest time is effective.

If \textit{Time} is 0 or 0.0, \texttt{thread\_get\_message/3} examines the queue but does not suspend if no matching term is available. Note that unlike \texttt{thread\_peek\_message/2}, a matching term is removed from the queue.

If \textit{Time} < 0, \texttt{thread\_get\_message/3} fails immediately.

**\texttt{thread\_peek\_message**(\(+Queue, \ ?Term\))**}

As \texttt{thread\_peek\_message/1}, operating on a given queue. It is allowed to peek into another thread’s message queue, an operation that can be used to check whether a thread has swallowed a message sent to it.

**\texttt{message\_queue\_property**(\(?Queue, \ ?Property\))**}

True if \textit{Property} is a property of \textit{Queue}. Defined properties are:

- **\texttt{alias**(\(Alias\))**}
  
  Queue has the given alias name.

- **\texttt{max\_size**(\(Size\))**}
  
  Maximum number of terms that can be in the queue. See \texttt{message\_queue\_create/2}. This property is not present if there is no limit (default).

- **\texttt{size**(\(Size\))**}
  
  Queue currently contains \textit{Size} terms. Note that due to concurrent access the returned value may be outdated before it is returned. It can be used for debugging purposes as well as work distribution purposes.

The \texttt{size(\textit{Size})} property is always present and may be used to enumerate the created message queues. Note that this predicate does \textit{not} enumerate threads, but can be used to query the properties of the default queue of a thread.

Explicit message queues are designed with the \textit{worker-pool} model in mind, where multiple threads wait on a single queue and pick up the first goal to execute. Below is a simple implementation where the workers execute arbitrary Prolog goals. Note that this example provides no means to tell when all work is done. This must be realised using additional synchronisation.

```prolog
%% create_workers(\(?Id, \ +N\))
%
%% Create a pool with \textit{Id} and number of workers.
```

\(^5\)The implementation uses \texttt{Msg\_Wait\_For\_Multiple\_Objects()} on MS-Windows and \texttt{pthread\_cond\_timed\_wait()} on other systems.
After the pool is created, post_job/1 can be used to send jobs to the pool.

```prolog
create_workers(Id, N) :-
    message_queue_create(Id),
    forall(between(1, N, _),
        thread_create(do_work(Id), _, [])).

do_work(Id) :-
    repeat,
    thread_get_message(Id, Goal),
    ( catch(Goal, E, print_message(error, E))
      -> true
      ; print_message(error, goal_failed(Goal, worker(Id)))
    ),
    fail.

post_job(Id, Goal) :-
    thread_send_message(Id, Goal).
```

### 8.3.2 Signalling threads

These predicates provide a mechanism to make another thread execute some goal as an *interrupt*. Signalling threads is safe as these interrupts are only checked at safe points in the virtual machine. Nevertheless, signalling in multithreaded environments should be handled with care as the receiving thread may hold a *mutex* (see with_mutex/2). Signalling probably only makes sense to start debugging threads and to cancel no-longer-needed threads with throw/1, where the receiving thread should be designed carefully to handle exceptions at any point.

**thread_signal(+ThreadId, :Goal)**

Make thread ThreadId execute Goal at the first opportunity. In the current implementation, this implies at the first pass through the Call-port. The predicate thread_signal/2 itself places Goal into the signalled thread’s signal queue and returns immediately.

Signals (interrupts) do not cooperate well with the world of multithreading, mainly because the status of mutexes cannot be guaranteed easily. At the call-port, the Prolog virtual machine holds no locks and therefore the asynchronous execution is safe.

Goal can be any valid Prolog goal, including throw/1 to make the receiving thread generate an exception, and trace/0 to start tracing the receiving thread.

In the Windows version, the receiving thread immediately executes the signal if it reaches a Windows GetMessage() call, which generally happens if the thread is waiting for (user-)input.
8.3.3 Threads and dynamic predicates

Besides queues (section 8.3.1) threads can share and exchange data using dynamic predicates. The multithreaded version knows about two types of dynamic predicates. By default, a predicate declared dynamic (see dynamic/1) is shared by all threads. Each thread may assert, retract and run the dynamic predicate. Synchronisation inside Prolog guarantees the consistency of the predicate. Updates are logical: visible clauses are not affected by assert/retract after a query started on the predicate. In many cases primitives from section 8.4 should be used to ensure that application invariants on the predicate are maintained.

Besides shared predicates, dynamic predicates can be declared with the thread_local/1 directive. Such predicates share their attributes, but the clause list is different in each thread.

thread_local +Functor/+Arity, …

This directive is related to the dynamic/1 directive. It tells the system that the predicate may be modified using assert/1, retract/1, etc., during execution of the program. Unlike normal shared dynamic data, however, each thread has its own clause list for the predicate. As a thread starts, this clause list is empty. If there are still clauses when the thread terminates, these are automatically reclaimed by the system (see also volatile/1). The thread_local property implies the properties dynamic and volatile.

Thread-local dynamic predicates are intended for maintaining thread-specific state or intermediate results of a computation.

It is not recommended to put clauses for a thread-local predicate into a file, as in the example below, because the clause is only visible from the thread that loaded the source file. All other threads start with an empty clause list.

```prolog
:- thread_local
    foo/1.

foo(gnat).
```

DISCLAIMER Whether or not this declaration is appropriate in the sense of the proper mechanism to reach the goal is still debated. If you have strong feelings in favour or against, please share them in the SWI-Prolog mailing list.

8.4 Thread synchronisation

All internal Prolog operations are thread-safe. This implies that two Prolog threads can operate on the same dynamic predicate without corrupting the consistency of the predicate. This section deals with user-level mutexes (called monitors in ADA or critical-sections by Microsoft). A mutex is a MUTual EXclusive device, which implies that at most one thread can hold a mutex.

Mutexes are used to realise related updates to the Prolog database. With ‘related’, we refer to the situation where a ‘transaction’ implies two or more changes to the Prolog database. For example, we have a predicate address/2, representing the address of a person and we want to change the address by retracting the old and asserting the new address. Between these two operations the database is invalid: this person has either no address or two addresses, depending on the assert/retract order.

Here is how to realise a correct update:
8.4. THREAD SYNCHRONISATION

```prolog
:- initialization
    mutex_create(addressbook).

change_address(Id, Address) :-
    mutex_lock(addressbook),
    retractall(address(Id, _)),
    asserta(address(Id, Address)),
    mutex_unlock(addressbook).
```

**mutex_create(?MutexId)**
Create a mutex. If *MutexId* is an atom, a *named* mutex is created. If it is a variable, an anonymous mutex reference is returned. There is no limit to the number of mutexes that can be created.

**mutex_create(-MutexId, +Options)**
Create a mutex using options. Defined options are:

- **alias(Alias)**
  
  Set the alias name. Using `mutex_create(X, [alias(name)])` is preferred over the equivalent `mutex_create(name)`.

**mutex_destroy(+MutexId)**
Destroy a mutex. After this call, *MutexId* becomes invalid and further references yield an existence_error exception.

**with_mutex(+MutexId, :Goal)**
Execute *Goal* while holding *MutexId*. If *Goal* leaves choice-points, these are destroyed (as in once/1). The mutex is unlocked regardless of whether *Goal* succeeds, fails or raises an exception. An exception thrown by *Goal* is re-thrown after the mutex has been successfully unlocked. See also `mutex_create/1` and `setup_call_cleanup/3`.

Although described in the thread section, this predicate is also available in the single-threaded version, where it behaves simply as once/1.

**mutex_lock(+MutexId)**
Lock the mutex. Prolog mutexes are *recursive* mutexes: they can be locked multiple times by the same thread. Only after unlocking it as many times as it is locked does the mutex become available for locking by other threads. If another thread has locked the mutex the calling thread is suspended until the mutex is unlocked.

If *MutexId* is an atom, and there is no current mutex with that name, the mutex is created automatically using `mutex_create/1`. This implies named mutexes need not be declared explicitly.

Please note that locking and unlocking mutexes should be paired carefully. Especially make sure to unlock mutexes even if the protected code fails or raises an exception. For most common cases, use `with_mutex/2`, which provides a safer way for handling Prolog-level mutexes. The predicate `setup_call_cleanup/3` is another way to guarantee that the mutex is unlocked while retaining non-determinism.
mutex_trylock(+MutexId)
  As mutex.lock/1, but if the mutex is held by another thread, this predicate fails immediately.

mutex_unlock(+MutexId)
  Unlock the mutex. This can only be called if the mutex is held by the calling thread. If this is not the case, a permission_error exception is raised.

mutex_unlock_all
  Unlock all mutexes held by the current thread. This call is especially useful to handle thread termination using abort/0 or exceptions. See also thread_signal/2.

mutex_property(?MutexId, ?Property)
  True if Property is a property of MutexId. Defined properties are:

    alias(Alias)
    Mutex has the defined alias name. See mutex_create/2 using the ‘alias’ option.

    status(Status)
    Current status of the mutex. One of unlocked if the mutex is currently not locked, or locked(Owner, Count) if mutex is locked Count times by thread Owner. Note that unless Owner is the calling thread, the locked status can change at any time. There is no useful application of this property, except for diagnostic purposes.\(^6\)

8.5 Thread support library(threadutil)

This library defines a couple of useful predicates for demonstrating and debugging multithreaded applications. This library is certainly not complete.

threads
  Lists all current threads and their status.

join_threads
  Join all terminated threads. For normal applications, dealing with terminated threads must be part of the application logic, either detaching the thread before termination or making sure it will be joined. The predicate join_threads/0 is intended for interactive sessions to reclaim resources from threads that died unexpectedly during development.

interactor
  Create a new console and run the Prolog top-level in this new console. See also attach_console/0. In the Windows version a new interactor can also be created from the Run/New thread menu.

8.5.1 Debugging threads

Support for debugging threads is still very limited. Debug and trace mode are flags that are local to each thread. Individual threads can be debugged either using the graphical debugger described in section 3.5 (see tspy/1 and friends) or by attaching a console to the thread and running the

\(^6\)BUG: As Owner and Count are fetched separately from the mutex, the values may be inconsistent.
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traditional command-line debugger (see attach_console/0). When using the graphical debugger, the debugger must be loaded from the main thread (for example using guitracer) before gtrace/0 can be called from a thread.

attach_console
If the current thread has no console attached yet, attach one and redirect the user streams (input, output, and error) to the new console window. On Unix systems the console is an xterm application. On Windows systems this requires the GUI version swipl-win.exe rather than the console-based swipl.exe.

This predicate has a couple of useful applications. One is to separate (debugging) I/O of different threads. Another is to start debugging a thread that is running in the background. If thread 10 is running, the following sequence starts the tracer on this thread:

?- thread_signal(10, (attach_console, trace)).

\[ \text{tdebug} (+\text{ThreadId}) \]
Prepare ThreadId for debugging using the graphical tracer. This implies installing the tracer hooks in the thread and switching the thread to debug mode using debug/0. The call is injected into the thread using thread_signal/2. We refer to the documentation of this predicate for asynchronous interaction with threads. New threads created inherit their debug mode from the thread that created them.

tdebug
Call tdebug/1 in all running threads.

\[ \text{tnodebug} (+\text{ThreadId}) \]
Disable debugging thread ThreadId.

\[ \text{tnodebug} \]
Disable debugging in all threads.

\[ \text{tspy}(\text{Spec}, +\text{ThreadId}) \]
Set a spy-point as spy/1 and enable the thread for debugging using tdebug/1. Note that a spy-point is a global flag on a predicate that is visible from all threads. Spy points are honoured in all threads that are in debug mode and ignored in threads that are in nodebug mode.

\[ \text{tspy}(\text{Spec}) \]
Set a spy-point as spy/1 and enable debugging in all threads using tdebug/0. Note that removing spy-points can be done using nospy/1. Disabling spy-points in a specific thread is achieved by tnodebug/1.

8.5.2 Profiling threads
In the current implementation, at most one thread can be profiled at any moment. Any thread can call profile/1 to profile the execution of some part of its code. The predicate tprofile/1 allows for profiling the execution of another thread until the user stops collecting profile data.

\[ \text{tprofile} (+\text{ThreadId}) \]
Start collecting profile data in ThreadId and ask the user to hit \textbf{(return)} to stop the profiler. See section 4.39 for details on the execution profiler.
8.6 Unbounded thread creation

(SWI-)Prolog threads are rather heavyweight objects, notably on 32-bit systems, because every thread uses a considerable amount of virtual address space. SWI-Prolog threads claim the stack limit in virtual address space for each of the runtime stacks, while on 32-bit systems this resource is generally limited somewhere between 1 GB and 3.5 GB, depending on the operating system and operating configuration.

If SWI-Prolog starts a thread it copies the initial goal and starts a POSIX thread which allocates a new Prolog engine that starts proving the given goal. If allocation of the engine fails, typically due to lack of virtual memory space, the thread is still created with minimal (8 Kbyte) stacks and immediately calls its exit handlers. See the option at_exit(Goal). Although this mechanism allows for handling this type of error gracefully it is not safe to rely on it. Allocating an engine that nearly exhausts virtual address space may cause failures in normal memory allocation that can appear anywhere in Prolog or the foreign libraries used by it. Such errors typically kill the process with a fatal error.

Especially on 32-bit hardware, the design of the application must consider this issue and avoid ungraceful termination, being conservative with the dynamic creation of new threads.

8.7 Multi-threaded mixed C and Prolog applications

All foreign code linked to the multithreading version of SWI-Prolog should be thread-safe (reentrant) or guarded in Prolog using with_mutex/2 from simultaneous access from multiple Prolog threads. If you want to write mixed multithreaded C and Prolog applications you should first familiarise yourself with writing multithreaded applications in C (C++)

If you are using SWI-Prolog as an embedded engine in a multithreaded application you can access the Prolog engine from multiple threads by creating an engine in each thread from which you call Prolog. Without creating an engine, a thread can only use functions that do not use the term_type (for example PL_new_atom()).

The system supports two models. Section 8.7.1 describes the original one-to-one mapping. In this schema a native thread attaches a Prolog thread if it needs to call Prolog and detaches it when finished, as opposed to the model from section 8.7.2, where threads temporarily use a Prolog engine.

8.7.1 A Prolog thread for each native thread (one-to-one)

In the one-to-one model, the thread that called PL_initialise() has a Prolog engine attached. If another C-thread in the system wishes to call Prolog it must first attach an engine using PL_thread_attach_engine() and call PL_thread_destroy_engine() after all Prolog work is finished. This model is especially suitable with long running threads that need to do Prolog work regularly. See section 8.7.2 for the alternative many-to-many model.

int PL_thread_self()

Returns the integer Prolog identifier of the engine or -1 if the calling thread has no Prolog engine. This function is also provided in the single-threaded version of SWI-Prolog, where it returns -2.

int PL_unify_thread_id(term t, int i)

Unify t with the Prolog thread identifier for thread i. Thread identifiers are normally returned from PL_thread_self(). Returns -1 if the thread does not exist or the unification fails.

---

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int PL_thread_attach_engine(const PL_thread_attr_t *attr)

Creates a new Prolog engine in the calling thread. If the calling thread already has an engine the reference count of the engine is incremented. The attr argument can be NULL to create a thread with default attributes. Otherwise it is a pointer to a structure with the definition below. For any field with value ‘0’, the default is used. The cancel field may be filled with a pointer to a function that is called when PL_cleanup() terminates the running Prolog engines. If this function is not present or returns FALSE pthread_cancel() is used.

```c
typedef struct {
    unsigned long local_size; /* Stack sizes (K-bytes) */
    unsigned long global_size;
    unsigned long trail_size;
    unsigned long argument_size;
    char * alias; /* alias name */
    int (*cancel)(int thread);
} PL_thread_attr_t;
```

The structure may be destroyed after PL_thread_attach_engine() has returned. On success it returns the Prolog identifier for the thread (as returned by PL_thread_self()). If an error occurs, -1 is returned. If this Prolog is not compiled for multithreading, -2 is returned.

int PL_thread_destroy_engine()

Destroy the Prolog engine in the calling thread. Only takes effect if PL_thread_destroy_engine() is called as many times as PL_thread_attach_engine() in this thread. Returns TRUE on success and FALSE if the calling thread has no engine or this Prolog does not support threads.

Please note that construction and destruction of engines are relatively expensive operations. Only destroy an engine if performance is not critical and memory is a critical resource.

int PL_thread_at_exit(void (*function)(void *), void *closure, int global)

Register a handle to be called as the Prolog engine is destroyed. The handler function is called with one void * argument holding closure. If global is TRUE, the handler is installed for all threads. Globally installed handlers are executed after the thread-local handlers. If the handler is installed local for the current thread only (global == FALSE) it is stored in the same FIFO queue as used by thread_at_exit/1.

### 8.7.2 Pooling Prolog engines (many-to-many)

In this model Prolog engines live as entities that are independent from threads. If a thread needs to call Prolog it takes one of the engines from the pool and returns the engine when done. This model is suitable in the following identified cases:

- **Compatibility with the single-threaded version**
  In the single-threaded version, foreign threads must serialise access to the one and only thread engine. Functions from this section allow sharing one engine among multiple threads.

- **Many native threads with infrequent Prolog work**
  Prolog threads are expensive in terms of memory and time to create and destroy them. For
systems that use a large number of threads that only infrequently need to call Prolog, it is better
to take an engine from a pool and return it there.

- **Prolog status must be handed to another thread**
  This situation has been identified by Uwe Lesta when creating a .NET interface for SWI-Prolog.
  .NET distributes work for an active internet connection over a pool of threads. If a Prolog engine
  contains the state for a connection, it must be possible to detach the engine from a thread and
  re-attach it to another thread handling the same connection.

```c
PL_engine_t PL_create_engine(PL_thread_attr_t *attributes)
Create a new Prolog engine. *attributes is described with PL_thread_attach_engine().
Any thread can make this call after PL_initialise() returns success. The returned engine
is not attached to any thread and lives until PL_destroy_engine() is used on the returned
handle.
```

In the single-threaded version this call always returns NULL, indicating failure.

```c
int PL_destroy_engine(PL_engine_t e)
Destroy the given engine. Destroying an engine is only allowed if the engine is not attached to
any thread or attached to the calling thread. On success this function returns TRUE, on failure
the return value is FALSE.
```

```c
int PL_set_engine(PL_engine_t engine, PL_engine_t *old)
Make the calling thread ready to use engine. If *old is non-NULL the current engine associated
with the calling thread is stored at the given location. If engine equals PL_ENGINE_MAIN the
initial engine is attached to the calling thread. If engine is PL_ENGINE_CURRENT the engine is
not changed. This can be used to query the current engine. This call returns PL_ENGINE_SET
if the engine was switched successfully, PL_ENGINE_INVAL if engine is not a valid engine
handle and PL_ENGINE_INUSE if the engine is currently in use by another thread.

Engines can be changed at any time. For example, it is allowed to select an engine to initiate a
Prolog goal, detach it and at a later moment execute the goal from another thread. Note however
that the term_t, qid_t and fid_t types are interpreted relative to the engine for which they
are created. Behaviour when passing one of these types from one engine to another is undefined.

In the single-threaded version this call only succeeds if engine refers to the main engine.

**Engines in single-threaded SWI-Prolog**

In theory it is possible to port the API of section 8.7.2 to the single-threaded version of SWI-Prolog.
This allows C-programs to control multiple Prolog engines concurrently. This has not yet been re-
alised.

### 8.8 Multithreading and the XPCE graphics system

GUI applications written in XPCE can benefit from Prolog threads if they need to do expensive com-
putations that would otherwise block the UI. The XPCE message passing system is guarded with a
single mutex, which synchronises both access from Prolog and activation through the GUI. In MS-
Windows, GUI events are processed by the thread that created the window in which the event occurred,
whereas in Unix/X11 they are processed by the thread that dispatches messages. In practice, the most
feasible approach to graphical Prolog implementations is to control XPCE from a single thread and deploy other threads for (long) computations.

Traditionally, XPCE runs in the foreground (main) thread. We are working towards a situation where XPCE can run comfortably in a separate thread. A separate XPCE thread can be created using `pce_dispatch/1`. It is also possible to create this thread as the (pce) is loaded by setting the `xpce_threaded` to `true`.

Threads other than the thread in which XPCE runs are provided with two predicates to communicate with XPCE.

**in_pce_thread(:Goal)**  
Assuming XPCE is running in the foreground thread, this call gives background threads the opportunity to make calls to the XPCE thread. A call to `in_pce_thread/1` succeeds immediately, copying `Goal` to the XPCE thread. `Goal` is added to the XPCE event queue and executed synchronous to normal user events like typing and clicking.

**in_pce_thread_sync(:Goal)**  
Same as `in_pce_thread/1`, but wait for `Goal` to be completed. Success depends on the success of executing `Goal`. Variable bindings inside `Goal` are visible to the caller, but it should be noted that the values are being copied. If `Goal` throws an exception, this exception is re-thrown by `in_pce_thread/1`. If the calling thread is the ‘pce thread’, `in_pce_thread_sync/1` executes a direct meta-call. See also `pce_thread/1`.

Note that `in_pce_thread_sync/1` is expensive because it requires copying and thread communication. For example, `in_pce_thread_synctrue` runs at approximately 50,000 calls per second (AMD Phenom 9600B, Ubuntu 11.04).

**pce_dispatch(+Options)**  
Create a Prolog thread with the alias name `pce` for XPCE event-handling. In the X11 version this call creates a thread that executes the X11 event-dispatch loop. In MS-Windows it creates a thread that executes a windows event-dispatch loop. The XPCE event-handling thread has the alias `pce`. `Options` specifies the thread attributes as `thread_create/3`. 

SWI-Prolog 6.2 Reference Manual
SWI-Prolog offers a powerful interface to C [Kernighan & Ritchie, 1978]. The main design objectives of the foreign language interface are flexibility and performance. A foreign predicate is a C function that has the same number of arguments as the predicate represented. C functions are provided to analyse the passed terms, convert them to basic C types as well as to instantiate arguments using unification. Non-deterministic foreign predicates are supported, providing the foreign function with a handle to control backtracking.

C can call Prolog predicates, providing both a query interface and an interface to extract multiple solutions from a non-deterministic Prolog predicate. There is no limit to the nesting of Prolog calling C, calling Prolog, etc. It is also possible to write the ‘main’ in C and use Prolog as an embedded logical engine.

### 9.1 Overview of the Interface

A special include file called `SWI-Prolog.h` should be included with each C-source file that is to be loaded via the foreign interface. The installation process installs this file in the directory `include` in the SWI-Prolog home directory. This C-header file defines various data types, macros and functions that can be used to communicate with SWI-Prolog. Functions and macros can be divided into the following categories:

- Analysing Prolog terms
- Constructing new terms
- Unifying terms
- Returning control information to Prolog
- Registering foreign predicates with Prolog
- Calling Prolog from C
- Recorded database interactions
- Global actions on Prolog (halt, break, abort, etc.)

### 9.2 Linking Foreign Modules

Foreign modules may be linked to Prolog in two ways. Using **static linking**, the extensions, a (short) file defining main() which attaches the extensions calls to Prolog, and the SWI-Prolog kernel distributed as a C library are linked together to form a new executable. Using **dynamic linking**, the extensions are linked to a shared library (.so file on most Unix systems) or dynamic link library (.DLL file on Microsoft platforms) and loaded into the running Prolog process.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\)The system also contains code to load .o files directly for some operating systems, notably Unix systems using the BSD a.out executable format. As the number of Unix platforms supporting this quickly gets smaller and this interface is
9.2. LINKING FOREIGN MODULES

9.2.1 What linking is provided?

The static linking schema can be used on all versions of SWI-Prolog. Whether or not dynamic linking is supported can be deduced from the Prolog flag open_shared_object (see current_prolog_flag/2). If this Prolog flag yields true, open_shared_object/2 and related predicates are defined. See section 9.2.3 for a suitable high-level interface to these predicates.

9.2.2 What kind of loading should I be using?

All described approaches have their advantages and disadvantages. Static linking is portable and allows for debugging on all platforms. It is relatively cumbersome and the libraries you need to pass to the linker may vary from system to system, though the utility program swipl-ld described in section 9.5 often hides these problems from the user.

Loading shared objects (DLL files on Windows) provides sharing and protection and is generally the best choice. If a saved state is created using qsave_program/[1,2], an initialization/1 directive may be used to load the appropriate library at start-up.

Note that the definition of the foreign predicates is the same, regardless of the linking type used.

9.2.3 library(shlib): Utility library for loading foreign objects (DLLs, shared objects)

This section discusses the functionality of the (autoload) library(shlib), providing an interface to manage shared libraries. We describe the procedure for using a foreign resource (DLL in Windows and shared object in Unix) called mylib.

First, one must assemble the resource and make it compatible to SWI-Prolog. The details for this vary between platforms. The swipl-ld(1) utility can be used to deal with this in a portable manner. The typical commandline is:

```
swipl-ld -o mylib file.{c,o,cc,C} ...
```

Make sure that one of the files provides a global function install_mylib() that initialises the module using calls to PL_register_foreign(). Here is a simple example file mylib.c, which creates a Windows MessageBox:

```c
#include <windows.h>
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>

static foreign_t
pl_say_hello(term_t to)
{ char *a;

  if ( PL_get_atom_chars(to, &a) )
  { MessageBox(NULL, a, "DLL test", MB_OK|MB_TASKMODAL);
    PL_succeed;
  }
}
```

difficult to port and slow, it is no longer described in this manual. The best alternative would be to use the dld package on machines that do not have shared libraries.
Now write a file `mylib.pl`:

```prolog
:- module(mylib, [ say_hello/1 ]).
:- use_foreign_library(foreign(mylib)).
```

The file `mylib.pl` can be loaded as a normal Prolog file and provides the predicate defined in C.

### `load_foreign_library/1` [det]

### `load_foreign_library(FileSpec, +Entry:atom)` [det]

Load a shared object or DLL. After loading the `Entry` function is called without arguments. The default entry function is composed from `install=`, followed by the file base-name. E.g., the load-call below calls the function `install_mylib()`. If the platform prefixes extern functions with `=_=`, this prefix is added before calling.

```prolog
... load_foreign_library(foreign(mylib)), ...
```

**Parameters**

`FileSpec` is a specification for `absolute_file_name/3`. If searching the file fails, the plain name is passed to the OS to try the default method of the OS for locating foreign objects. The default definition of `file_search_path/2` searches `<prolog home>/lib/<arch>` on Unix and `<prolog home>/bin` on Windows.

See also `use_foreign_library/1,2` are intended for use in directives.

### `use_foreign_library(+FileSpec)` [det]

### `use_foreign_library(+FileSpec, +Entry:atom)` [det]

Load and install a foreign library as `load_foreign_library/1,2` and register the installation using `initialization/2` with the option `now`. This is similar to using:

```prolog
:- initialization(load_foreign_library(foreign(mylib))).
```
but using the initialization/1 wrapper causes the library to be loaded after loading of the file in which it appears is completed, while use_foreign_library/1 loads the library immediately. I.e. the difference is only relevant if the remainder of the file uses functionality of the C-library.

unload_foreign_library(+FileSpec) [det]
unload_foreign_library(+FileSpec, +Exit:atom) [det]
Unload a shared object or DLL. After calling the Exit function, the shared object is removed from the process. The default exit function is composed from =uninstall_=, followed by the file base-name.

current_foreign_library(?File, ?Public)
Query currently loaded shared libraries.

reload_foreign_libraries
Reload all foreign libraries loaded (after restore of a state created using qsave_program/2.

9.2.4 Low-level operations on shared libraries

The interface defined in this section allows the user to load shared libraries (.so files on most Unix systems, .dll files on Windows). This interface is portable to Windows as well as to Unix machines providing dlopen(2) (Solaris, Linux, FreeBSD, Irix and many more) or shl_open (2) (HP/UX). It is advised to use the predicates from section 9.2.3 in your application.

open_shared_object(+File, -Handle)
File is the name of a shared object file (DLL in MS-Windows). This file is attached to the current process and Handle is unified with a handle to the library. Equivalent to open_shared_object(File, Handle, []). See also open_shared_object/3 and load_foreign_library/1.

On errors, an exception shared_object(Action, Message) is raised. Message is the return value from dlerror().

open_shared_object(+File, -Handle, +Options)
As open_shared_object/2, but allows for additional flags to be passed. Options is a list of atoms. now implies the symbols are resolved immediately rather than lazy (default). global implies symbols of the loaded object are visible while loading other shared objects (by default they are local). Note that these flags may not be supported by your operating system. Check the documentation of dlopen() or equivalent on your operating system. Unsupported flags are silently ignored.

close_shared_object(+Handle)
Detach the shared object identified by Handle.

call_shared_object_function(+Handle, +Function)
Call the named function in the loaded shared library. The function is called without arguments and the return value is ignored. Normally this function installs foreign language predicates using calls to PL_register_foreign().
9.2.5 Static Linking

Below is an outline of the files structure required for statically linking SWI-Prolog with foreign extensions. 

.../swipl refers to the SWI-Prolog home directory (see the Prolog flag home). \langle arch \rangle refers to the architecture identifier that may be obtained using the Prolog flag arch.

.../swipl/runtime/\langle arch \rangle/libswipl.a SWI-Library
.../swipl/include/SWI-Prolog.h Include file
.../swipl/include/SWI-Stream.h Stream I/O include file
.../swipl/include/SWI-Exports Export declarations (AIX only)
.../swipl/include/stub.c Extension stub

The definition of the foreign predicates is the same as for dynamic linking. Unlike with dynamic linking however, there is no initialisation function. Instead, the file .../swipl/include/stub.c may be copied to your project and modified to define the foreign extensions. Below is stub.c, modified to link the lowercase example described later in this chapter:

```
#include <stdio.h>
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>

extern foreign_t pl_lowercase(term, term);

PL_extension predicates[] =
{
    /*{ "name", arity, function, PL_FA_<flags> },*/
    { "lowercase", 2, pl_lowercase, 0 },
    { NULL, 0, NULL, 0 }, /* terminating line */
};

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    PL_register_extensions(predicates);
    if ( !PL_initialise(argc, argv) )
        PL_halt(1);
    PL_install_readline(); /* delete if not required */
    PL_halt(PL_toplevel() ? 0 : 1);
}
```

Now, a new executable may be created by compiling this file and linking it to libpl.a from the runtime directory and the libraries required by both the extensions and the SWI-Prolog kernel. This may be done by hand, or by using the swipl-ld utility described in section 9.5. If the linking is performed by hand, the command line option -dump-runtime-variables (see section 2.4) can be used to obtain the required paths, libraries and linking options to link the new executable.
9.3 Interface Data types

9.3.1 Type `term_t`: a reference to a Prolog term

The principal data type is `term_t`. Type `term_t` is what Quintus calls `QP_term_ref`. This name indicates better what the type represents: it is a handle for a term rather than the term itself. Terms can only be represented and manipulated using this type, as this is the only safe way to ensure the Prolog kernel is aware of all terms referenced by foreign code and thus allows the kernel to perform garbage collection and/or stack-shifts while foreign code is active, for example during a callback from C.

A term reference is a C unsigned long, representing the offset of a variable on the Prolog environment stack. A foreign function is passed term references for the predicate arguments, one for each argument. If references for intermediate results are needed, such references may be created using `PL_new_term_ref()` or `PL_new_term_refs()`. These references normally live till the foreign function returns control back to Prolog. Their scope can be explicitly limited using `PL_open_foreign_frame()` and `PL_close_foreign_frame()` or `PL_discard_foreign_frame()`.

A `term_t` always refers to a valid Prolog term (variable, atom, integer, float or compound term). A term lives either until backtracking takes us back to a point before the term was created, the garbage collector has collected the term, or the term was created after a `PL_open_foreign_frame()` and `PL_discard_foreign_frame()` has been called.

The foreign interface functions can either read, unify or write to term references. In this document we use the following notation for arguments of type `term_t`:

- `term_t +t` Accessed in read-mode. The ‘+’ indicates the argument is ‘input’.
- `term_t -t` Accessed in write-mode.
- `term_t ?t` Accessed in unify-mode.

Term references are obtained in any of the following ways:

- **Passed as argument**
  The C functions implementing foreign predicates are passed their arguments as term references. These references may be read or unified. Writing to these variables causes undefined behaviour.

- **Created by `PL_new_term_ref()`**
  A term created by `PL_new_term_ref()` is normally used to build temporary terms or to be written by one of the interface functions. For example, `PL_get_arg()` writes a reference to the term argument in its last argument.

- **Created by `PL_new_term_refs(int n)`**
  This function returns a set of term references with the same characteristics as `PL_new_term_ref()`. See `PL_open_query()`.

- **Created by `PL_copy_term_ref(term_t t)`**
  Creates a new term reference to the same term as the argument. The term may be written to. See figure 9.2.

Term references can safely be copied to other C variables of type `term_t`, but all copies will always refer to the same term.

```
term_t PL_new_term_ref()
```

Return a fresh reference to a term. The reference is allocated on the local stack. Allocating
a term reference may trigger a stack-shift on machines that cannot use sparse memory management for allocation of the Prolog stacks. The returned reference describes a variable.

\texttt{term_t \textbf{PL\_new\_term\_refs}(int n)}

Return \textit{n} new term references. The first term reference is returned. The others are \( t + 1 \), \( t + 2 \), etc. There are two reasons for using this function. \texttt{PL\_open\_query()} expects the arguments as a set of consecutive term references, and \textit{very} time-critical code requiring a number of term references can be written as:

\begin{verbatim}
pl\_mypredicate(term\_t a0, term\_t a1)
{ term\_t t0 = PL\_new\_term\_refs(2);
  term\_t t1 = t0+1;
  ...
}
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{term\_t \textbf{PL\_copy\_term\_ref}(term\_t \textit{from})}

Create a new term reference and make it point initially to the same term as \textit{from}. This function is commonly used to copy a predicate argument to a term reference that may be written.

\texttt{void \textbf{PL\_reset\_term\_refs}(term\_t \textit{after})}

Destroy all term references that have been created after \textit{after}, including \textit{after} itself. Any reference to the invalidated term references after this call results in undefined behaviour.

Note that returning from the foreign context to Prolog will reclaim all references used in the foreign context. This call is only necessary if references are created inside a loop that never exits back to Prolog. See also \texttt{PL\_open\_foreign\_frame()}, \texttt{PL\_close\_foreign\_frame()} and \texttt{PL\_discard\_foreign\_frame()}.

\textbf{Interaction with the garbage collector and stack-shifter}

Prolog implements two mechanisms for avoiding stack overflow: garbage collection and stack expansion. On machines that allow for it, Prolog will use virtual memory management to detect stack overflow and expand the runtime stacks. On other machines Prolog will reallocate the stacks and update all pointers to them. To do so, Prolog needs to know which data is referenced by C code. As all Prolog data known by C is referenced through term references (\texttt{term\_t}), Prolog has all the information necessary to perform its memory management without special precautions from the C programmer.

\subsection*{9.3.2 Other foreign interface types}

\textbf{atom\_t} An atom in Prolog’s internal representation. Atoms are pointers to an opaque structure. They are a unique representation for represented text, which implies that atom \textit{A} represents the same text as atom \textit{B} if and only if \textit{A} and \textit{B} are the same pointer.

Atoms are the central representation for textual constants in Prolog. The transformation of a character string \textit{C} to an atom implies a hash-table lookup. If the same atom is needed often, it is advised to store its reference in a global variable to avoid repeated lookup.
functor_t A functor is the internal representation of a name/arity pair. They are used to find the name and arity of a compound term as well as to construct new compound terms. Like atoms they live for the whole Prolog session and are unique.

predicate_t Handle to a Prolog predicate. Predicate handles live forever (although they can lose their definition).

qid_t Query identifier. Used by PL_open_query(), PL_next_solution() and PL_close_query() to handle backtracking from C.

fid_t Frame identifier. Used by PL_open_foreign_frame() and PL_close_foreign_frame().

module_t A module is a unique handle to a Prolog module. Modules are used only to call predicates in a specific module.

foreign_t Return type for a C function implementing a Prolog predicate.

control_t Passed as additional argument to non-deterministic foreign functions. See PL_retry*() and PL_foreign_context*().

install_t Type for the install() and uninstall() functions of shared or dynamic link libraries. See section 9.2.3.

int64_t Actually part of the C99 standard rather than Prolog. As of version 5.5.6, Prolog integers are 64-bit on all hardware. The C99 type int64_t is defined in the stdint.h standard header and provides platform-independent 64-bit integers. Portable code accessing Prolog should use this type to exchange integer values. Please note that PL_get_long() can return FALSE on Prolog integers that cannot be represented as a C long. Robust code should not assume any of the integer fetching functions to succeed, even if the Prolog term is known to be an integer.

9.4 The Foreign Include File

9.4.1 Argument Passing and Control

If Prolog encounters a foreign predicate at run time it will call a function specified in the predicate definition of the foreign predicate. The arguments $1, \ldots, \langle \text{arity} \rangle$ pass the Prolog arguments to the goal as Prolog terms. Foreign functions should be declared of type foreign_t. Deterministic foreign functions have two alternatives to return control back to Prolog:

(return) foreign_t PL_succeed()
Succeed deterministically. PL_succeed is defined as return TRUE.

(return) foreign_t PL_fail()
Fail and start Prolog backtracking. PL_fail is defined as return FALSE.
Non-deterministic Foreign Predicates

By default foreign predicates are deterministic. Using the `PL_FA_NONDETERMINISTIC` attribute (see `PL_register_foreign()`) it is possible to register a predicate as a non-deterministic predicate. Writing non-deterministic foreign predicates is slightly more complicated as the foreign function needs context information for generating the next solution. Note that the same foreign function should be prepared to be simultaneously active in more than one goal. Suppose the `natural_number_below_n/2` is a non-deterministic foreign predicate, backtracking over all natural numbers lower than the first argument. Now consider the following predicate:

```
quotient_below_n(Q, N) :-
    natural_number_below_n(N, N1),
    natural_number_below_n(N, N2),
    Q =:= N1 / N2, !.
```

In this predicate the function `natural_number_below_n` simultaneously generates solutions for both its invocations.

Non-deterministic foreign functions should be prepared to handle three different calls from Prolog:

- **Initial call (PL_FIRST_CALL)**
  Prolog has just created a frame for the foreign function and asks it to produce the first answer.

- **Redo call (PL_REDO)**
  The previous invocation of the foreign function associated with the current goal indicated it was possible to backtrack. The foreign function should produce the next solution.

- **Terminate call (PL_PRUNED)**
  The choice point left by the foreign function has been destroyed by a cut. The foreign function is given the opportunity to clean the environment.

Both the context information and the type of call is provided by an argument of type `control_t` appended to the argument list for deterministic foreign functions. The macro `PL_foreign_control()` extracts the type of call from the control argument. The foreign function can pass a context handle using the `PL_retry*()` macros and extract the handle from the extra argument using the `PL_foreign_context*()` macro.

**(return) foreign_t PL_retry(intptr_t value)**

The foreign function succeeds while leaving a choice point. On backtracking over this goal the foreign function will be called again, but the control argument now indicates it is a ‘Redo’ call and the macro `PL_foreign_context()` returns the handle passed via `PL_retry()`. This handle is a signed value two bits smaller than a pointer, i.e., 30 or 62 bits (two bits are used for status indication). Defined as `return _PL_retry(n)`. See also `PL_succeed()`.

**(return) foreign_t PL_retry_address(void *)**

As `PL_retry()`, but ensures an address as returned by `malloc()` is correctly recovered by `PL_foreign_context_address()`. Defined as `return _PL_retry_address(n)`. See also `PL_succeed()`.
typedef struct /* define a context structure */
{
    ...
} context;

foreign_t
my_function(term_t a0, term_t a1, control_t handle)
{
    struct context * ctxt;

    switch( PL_foreign_control(handle) )
    {
        case PL_FIRST_CALL:
            ctxt = malloc(sizeof(struct context));
            ...
            PL_retry_address(ctxt);
        case PL_REDO:
            ctxt = PL_foreign_context_address(handle);
            ...
            PL_retry_address(ctxt);
        case PL_PRUNED:
            ctxt = PL_foreign_context_address(handle);
            ...
            free(ctxt);
            PL_succeed;
    }
}

Figure 9.1: Skeleton for non-deterministic foreign functions

int PL_foreign_control(control_t)

Extracts the type of call from the control argument. The return values are described above. Note that the function should be prepared to handle the PL_PRUNED case and should be aware that the other arguments are not valid in this case.

intptr_t PL_foreign_context(control_t)

Extracts the context from the context argument. If the call type is PL_FIRST_CALL the context value is 0L. Otherwise it is the value returned by the last PL_retry() associated with this goal (both if the call type is PL_REDO or PL_PRUNED).

void * PL_foreign_context_address(control_t)

Extracts an address as passed in by PL_retry_address().

Note: If a non-deterministic foreign function returns using PL_succeed() or PL_fail(), Prolog assumes the foreign function has cleaned its environment. No call with control argument PL_PRUNED will follow.

The code of figure 9.1 shows a skeleton for a non-deterministic foreign predicate definition.
9.4.2 Atoms and functors

The following functions provide for communication using atoms and functors.

atom_t PL_new_atom(const char *)
Return an atom handle for the given C-string. This function always succeeds. The returned handle is valid as long as the atom is referenced (see section 9.4.2).

const char* PL_atom_chars(atom_t atom)
Return a C-string for the text represented by the given atom. The returned text will not be changed by Prolog. It is not allowed to modify the contents, not even ‘temporary’ as the string may reside in read-only memory. The returned string becomes invalid if the atom is garbage-collected (see section 9.4.2). Foreign functions that require the text from an atom passed in a term_t normally use PL_get_atom_chars() or PL_get_atom_nchars().

functor_t PL_new functor(atom_t name, int arity)
Returns a functor identifier, a handle for the name/arity pair. The returned handle is valid for the entire Prolog session.

atom_t PL functor name(functor_t f)
Return an atom representing the name of the given functor.

int PL functor arity(functor_t f)
Return the arity of the given functor.

Atoms and atom garbage collection

With the introduction of atom garbage collection in version 3.3.0, atoms no longer live as long as the process. Instead, their lifetime is guaranteed only as long as they are referenced. In the single-threaded version, atom garbage collections are only invoked at the call-port. In the multi-threaded version (see chapter 8), they appear asynchronously, except for the invoking thread.

For dealing with atom garbage collection, two additional functions are provided:

void PL_register_atom(atom_t atom)
Increment the reference count of the atom by one. PL_new_atom() performs this automatically, returning an atom with a reference count of at least one.

void PL_unregister_atom(atom_t atom)
Decrement the reference count of the atom. If the reference count drops below zero, an assertion error is raised.

Please note that the following two calls are different with respect to atom garbage collection:

PL_unify_atom_chars(t, "text");
PL_unify_atom(t, PL_new_atom("text"));

The latter increments the reference count of the atom text, which effectively ensures the atom will never be collected. It is advised to use the *_chars() or *_nchars() functions whenever applicable.

2Otherwise asynchronous atom garbage collection might destroy the atom before it is used.
9.4.3 Analysing Terms via the Foreign Interface

Each argument of a foreign function (except for the control argument) is of type `term_t`, an opaque handle to a Prolog term. Three groups of functions are available for the analysis of terms. The first just validates the type, like the Prolog predicates `var/1, atom/1`, etc., and are called `PL_is_*()`. The second group attempts to translate the argument into a C primitive type. These predicates take a `term_t` and a pointer to the appropriate C type and return `TRUE` or `FALSE` depending on successful or unsuccessful translation. If the translation fails, the pointed-to data is never modified.

Testing the type of a term

```c
int PL_term_type(term_t)

Obtain the type of a term, which should be a term returned by one of the other interface predicates or passed as an argument. The function returns the type of the Prolog term. The type identifiers are listed below. Note that the extraction functions `PL_get_*()` also validate the type and thus the two sections below are equivalent.
```

```c
if ( PL_is_atom(t) )
{
    char *s;
    PL_get_atom_chars(t, &s);
    ...
}
```

or

```c
char *s;
if ( PL_get_atom_chars(t, &s) )
{
    ...
}
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PL_VARIABLE</th>
<th>An unbound variable. The value of term as such is a unique identifier for the variable.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL_ATOM</td>
<td>A Prolog atom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_STRING</td>
<td>A Prolog string.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_INTEGER</td>
<td>A Prolog integer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_FLOAT</td>
<td>A Prolog floating point number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_TERM</td>
<td>A compound term. Note that a list is a compound term ./2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The functions `PL_is_(type)` are an alternative to `PL_term_type()`. The test `PL_is_variable(term)` is equivalent to `PL_term_type(term) == PL_VARIABLE`, but the first is considerably faster. On the other hand, using a switch over `PL_term_type()` is faster and more readable than using an if-then-else using the functions below. All these functions return either `TRUE` or `FALSE`.

```c
int PL_is_variable(term_t)

Returns non-zero if `term` is a variable.
```
int PL_is_ground(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a ground term. See also ground/1. This function is cycle-safe.

int PL_is_atom(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is an atom.

int PL_is_string(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a string.

int PL_is_integer(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is an integer.

int PL_is_float(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a float.

int PL_is_compound(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a compound term.

int PL_is_functor(term_t, functor_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is compound and its functor is functor. This test is equivalent to PL_get functor(), followed by testing the functor, but easier to write and faster.

int PL_is_list(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a compound term with functor ./2 or the atom []. See also PL_is_pair() and PL_skip_list().

int PL_is_pair(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is a compound term with functor ./2. See also PL_is_list() and PL_skip_list().

int PL_is_atomic(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is atomic (not variable or compound).

int PL_is_number(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is an integer or float.

int PL_is_acyclic(term_t)
    Returns non-zero if term is acyclic (i.e. a finite tree).

Reading data from a term

The functions PL_get_*() read information from a Prolog term. Most of them take two arguments. The first is the input term and the second is a pointer to the output value or a term reference.

int PL_get_atom(term_t +t, atom_t *a)
    If t is an atom, store the unique atom identifier over a. See also PL_atom_chars() and PL_new_atom(). If there is no need to access the data (characters) of an atom, it is advised to manipulate atoms using their handle. As the atom is referenced by t, it will live at least as long as t does. If longer live-time is required, the atom should be locked using PL_register_atom().
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

int PL_get_atom_chars(term_t +t, char **s)
If \( t \) is an atom, store a pointer to a 0-terminated C-string in \( s \). It is explicitly not allowed to modify the contents of this string. Some built-in atoms may have the string allocated in read-only memory, so ‘temporary manipulation’ can cause an error.

int PL_get_string_chars(term_t +t, char **s, int *len)
If \( t \) is a string object, store a pointer to a 0-terminated C-string in \( s \) and the length of the string in \( len \). Note that this pointer is invalidated by backtracking, garbage collection and stack-shifts, so generally the only save operations are to pass it immediately to a C function that doesn’t involve Prolog.

int PL_get_chars(term_t +t, char **s, unsigned flags)
Convert the argument term \( t \) to a 0-terminated C-string. \( flags \) is a bitwise disjunction from two groups of constants. The first specifies which term types should be converted and the second how the argument is stored. Below is a specification of these constants. BUF_RING implies, if the data is not static (as from an atom), that the data is copied to the next buffer from a ring of 16 buffers. This is a convenient way of converting multiple arguments passed to a foreign predicate to C-strings. If BUF_MALLOC is used, the data must be freed using PL_free() when no longer needed.

With the introduction of wide characters (see section 2.18.1), not all atoms can be converted into a char*. This function fails if \( t \) is of the wrong type, but also if the text cannot be represented. See the REP_* flags below for details.

CVT_ATOM
Convert if term is an atom.

CVT_STRING
Convert if term is a string.

CVT_LIST
Convert if term is a list of of character codes.

CVT_INTEGER
Convert if term is an integer.

CVT_FLOAT
Convert if term is a float. The characters returned are the same as write/1 would write for the floating point number.

CVT_NUMBER
Convert if term is an integer or float.

CVT_ATOMIC
Convert if term is atomic.

CVT_VARIABLE
Convert variable to print-name

CVT_WRITE
Convert any term that is not converted by any of the other flags using write/1. If no BUF_* is provided, BUF_RING is implied.

CVT_WRITE_CANONICAL
As CVT_WRITE, but using writeCanonical/2.
CVT_ALL
Convert if term is any of the above, except for CVT_VARIABLE and CVT_WRITE.

CVT_EXCEPTION
If conversion fails due to a type error, raise a Prolog type error exception in addition to failure

BUF_DISCARDABLE
Data must copied immediately

BUF_RING
Data is stored in a ring of buffers

BUF_MALLOC
Data is copied to a new buffer returned by PL_malloc(3). When no longer needed the user must call PL_free() on the data.

REP_ISO_LATIN_1
Text is in ISO Latin-1 encoding and the call fails if text cannot be represented. This flag has the value 0 and is thus the default.

REP_UTF8
Convert the text to a UTF-8 string. This works for all text.

REP_MB
Convert to default locale-defined 8-bit string. Success depends on the locale. Conversion is done using the wcrtomb() C library function.

int PL_get_list_chars(+term t l, char **s, unsigned flags)
Same as PL_get_chars(l, s, CVT_LIST—flags), provided flags contains none of the CVT_* flags.

int PL_get_integer(+term t t, int *i)
If t is a Prolog integer, assign its value over i. On 32-bit machines, this is the same as PL_get_long(), but avoids a warning from the compiler. See also PL_get_long().

int PL_get_long(term_t +t, long *i)
If t is a Prolog integer that can be represented as a long, assign its value over i. If t is an integer that cannot be represented by a C long, this function returns FALSE. If t is a floating point number that can be represented as a long, this function succeeds as well. See also PL_get_int64().

int PL_get_int64(term_t +t, int64_t *i)
If t is a Prolog integer or float that can be represented as a int64_t, assign its value over i. Currently all Prolog integers can be represented using this type, but this might change if SWI-Prolog introduces unbounded integers.

int PL_get_intptr(term_t +t, intptr_t *i)
Get an integer that is at least as wide as a pointer. On most platforms this is the same as PL_get_long(), but on Win64 pointers are 8 bytes and longs only 4. Unlike PL_get_pointer(), the value is not modified.

int PL_get_bool(term t +t, int *val)
If t has the value true or false, set val to the C constant TRUE or FALSE and return success, otherwise return failure.
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int PL_get_pointer(term_t +t, void **ptr)
   In the current system, pointers are represented by Prolog integers, but need some manipulation to make sure they do not get truncated due to the limited Prolog integer range. PL_put_pointer() and PL_get_pointer() guarantee pointers in the range of malloc() are handled without truncating.

int PL_get_float(term_t +t, double *f)
   If t is a float or integer, its value is assigned over f.

int PL_get_functor(term_t +t, functor_t *f)
   If t is compound or an atom, the Prolog representation of the name-arity pair will be assigned over f. See also PL_get_name arity() and PL_is_functor().

int PL_get_name arity(term_t +t, atom_t *name, int *arity)
   If t is compound or an atom, the functor name will be assigned over name and the arity over arity. See also PL_get_functor() and PL_is_functor().

int PL_get_module(term_t +t, module_t *module)
   If t is an atom, the system will look up or create the corresponding module and assign an opaque pointer to it over module.

int PL_get_arg(int index, term_t +t, term_t -a)
   If t is compound and index is between 1 and arity (inclusive), assign a with a term reference to the argument.

int _PL_get_arg(int index, term_t +t, term_t -a)
   Same as PL_get_arg(), but no checking is performed, neither whether t is actually a term nor whether index is a valid argument index.

Exchanging text using length and string

All internal text representation in SWI-Prolog is represented using char * plus length and allow for 0-bytes in them. The foreign library supports this by implementing a *nchars() function for each applicable *chars() function. Below we briefly present the signatures of these functions. For full documentation consult the *_chars() function.

int PL_get_atom_nchars(term_t t, size_t *len, char **s)
   See PL_get_atom_chars().

int PL_get_list_nchars(term_t t, size_t *len, char **s)
   See PL_get_list_chars().

int PL_get_nchars(term_t t, size_t *len, char **s, unsigned int flags)
   See PL_get_chars().

int PL_put_atom_nchars(term_t t, size_t len, const char *s)
   See PL_put_atom_chars().

int PL_put_string_nchars(term_t t, size_t len, const char *s)
   See PL_put_string_chars().
In addition, the following functions are available for creating and inspecting atoms:

```c
atom_t PL_new_atom_nchars(size_t len, const char *s)
  Create a new atom as PL_new_atom(), but using the given length and characters.

const char * PL_atom_nchars(atom_t a, size_t *len)
  Extract the text and length of an atom.
```

**Wide-character versions**

Support for exchange of wide-character strings is still under consideration. The functions dealing with 8-bit character strings return failure when operating on a wide-character atom or Prolog string object. The functions below can extract and unify both 8-bit and wide atoms and string objects. Wide character strings are represented as C arrays of objects of the type `pl_wchar_t`, which is guaranteed to be the same as `wchar_t` on platforms supporting this type. For example, on MS-Windows, this represents 16-bit UCS2 characters, while using the GNU C library (glibc) this represents 32-bit UCS4 characters.

```c
atom_t PL_new_atom_wchars(size_t len, const pl_wchar_t *s)
  Create atom from wide-character string as PL_new_atom_nchars() does for ISO-Latin-1 strings. If s only contains ISO-Latin-1 characters a normal byte-array atom is created.

pl_wchar_t* PL_atom_wchars(atom_t atom, int *len)
  Extract characters from a wide-character atom. Fails (returns NULL) if atom is not a wide-character atom. This is the wide-character version of PL_atom_nchars(). Note that only one of these functions succeeds on a particular atom. Especially, after creating an atom with PL_new_atom_wchars(), extracting the text using PL_atom_wchars() will fail if the atom only contains ISO-Latin-1 characters.

int PL_get_wchars(term t, size_t *len, pl_wchar_t **s, unsigned flags)
  Wide-character version of PL_get_chars(). The flags argument is the same as for PL_get_chars().
```
int PL_unify_wchars(term_t t, int type, size_t len, const pl wchar_t *s)
Unify t with a textual representation of the C wide-character array s. The type argument defines the Prolog representation and is one of PL_ATOM, PL_STRING, PL_CODE_LIST or PL_CHAR_LIST.

int PL_unify_wchars_diff(term_t +t, term_t -tail, int type, size_t len, const pl wchar_t *s)
Difference list version of PL_unify_wchars(), only supporting the types PL_CODE_LIST and PL_CHAR_LIST. It serves two purposes. It allows for returning very long lists from data read from a stream without the need for a resizing buffer in C. Also, the use of difference lists is often practical for further processing in Prolog. Examples can be found in packages/clib/readutil.c from the source distribution.

Reading a list
The functions from this section are intended to read a Prolog list from C. Suppose we expect a list of atoms; the following code will print the atoms, each on a line:

```c
foreign_t
pl_write_atoms(term_t l)
{ term_t head = PL_new_term_ref(); /* the elements */
  term_t list = PL_copy_term_ref(l); /* copy (we modify list) */

  while( Pl_get_list(list, head, list) )
  { char *s;

    if ( PL_get_atom_chars(head, &s) )
      Sprintf("%s\n", s);
    else
      PL_fail;
  }

  return PL_get_nil(list); /* test end for [] */
}
```

int PL_get_list(term_t +l, term_t -h, term_t -t)
If l is a list and not [] assign a term reference to the head to h and to the tail to t.

int PL_get_head(term_t +l, term_t -h)
If l is a list and not [] assign a term reference to the head to h.

int PL_get_tail(term_t +l, term_t -t)
If l is a list and not [] assign a term reference to the tail to t.

int PL_get_nil(term_t +l)
Succeeds if l represents the atom [].

int PL_skip_list(term_t +list, term_t -tail, size_t *len)
This is a multi-purpose function to deal with lists. It allows for finding the length of a list,
checking whether something is a list, etc. The reference tail is set to point to the end of the list, len is filled with the number of list-cells skipped, and the return value indicates the status of the list:

**PL_LIST**
The list is a 'proper' list: one that ends in [] and tail is filled with []

**PL_PARTIAL_LIST**
The list is a 'partial' list: one that ends in a variable and tail is a reference to this variable.

**PL_CYCLIC_TERM**
The list is cyclic (e.g. X = [a— X]). tail points to an arbitrary cell of the list and len is at most twice the cycle length of the list.

**PL_NOT_A_LIST**
The term list is not a list at all. tail is bound to the non-list term and len is set to the number of list-cells skipped.

It is allowed to pass 0 for tail and NULL for len.

An example: defining write/1 in C

Figure 9.2 shows a simplified definition of write/1 to illustrate the described functions. This simplified version does not deal with operators. It is called display/1, because it mimics closely the behaviour of this Edinburgh predicate.

### 9.4.4 Constructing Terms

Terms can be constructed using functions from the PL_put_*() and PL_cons_*() families. This approach builds the term 'inside-out', starting at the leaves and subsequently creating compound terms. Alternatively, terms may be created 'top-down', first creating a compound holding only variables and subsequently unifying the arguments. This section discusses functions for the first approach. This approach is generally used for creating arguments for PL_call() and PL_open_query().

```c
void PL_put_variable(term_t -t)
Put a fresh variable in the term, resetting the term reference to its initial state. 3

void PL_put_atom(term_t -t, atom_t a)
Put an atom in the term reference from a handle. See also PL_new_atom() and PL_atom_chars().

void PL_put_bool(term_t -t, int val)
Put one of the atoms true or false in the term reference See also PL_put_atom(), PL_unify_bool() and PL_get_bool().

int PL_put_atom_chars(term_t -t, const char *chars)
Put an atom in the term reference constructed from the zero-terminated string. The string itself will never be referenced by Prolog after this function.
```

3 Older versions created a variable on the global stack.
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

foreign_t
pl_display(term_t t)
{ functor_t functor;
  int arity, len, n;
  char *s;

  switch( PL_term_type(t) )
  { case PL_VARIABLE:
      case PL_ATOM:
      case PL_INTEGER:
      case PL_FLOAT:
        PL_get_chars(t, &s, CVT_ALL);
        Sprintf("%s", s);
        break;
      case PL_STRING:
        PL_get_string_chars(t, &s, &len);
        Sprintf("""%s"", s);
        break;
      case PL_TERM:
        { term_t a = PL_new_term_ref();

          PL_get_name_arity(t, &name, &arity);
          Sprintf("%s(", PL_atom_chars(name));
          for(n=1; n<=arity; n++)
            { PL_get_arg(n, t, a);
              if ( n > 1 )
                Sprintf(""", ");
              pl_display(a);
            }
          Sprintf(""));
        break;
        default:
          PL_fail; /* should not happen */
        }
    }

  PL_succeed;
}
int PL_put_string_chars(term_t t, const char *chars)
Put a zero-terminated string in the term reference. The data will be copied. See also PL_put_string_nchars().

int PL_put_string_nchars(term_t t, size_t len, const char *chars)
Put a string, represented by a length/start pointer pair in the term reference. The data will be copied. This interface can deal with 0-bytes in the string. See also section 9.4.20.

int PL_put_list_chars(term_t t, const char *chars)
Put a list of ASCII values in the term reference.

int PL_put_integer(term_t t, long i)
Put a Prolog integer in the term reference.

int PL_put_int64(term_t t, int64_t i)
Put a Prolog integer in the term reference.

int PL_put_pointer(term_t t, void *ptr)
Put a Prolog integer in the term reference. Provided ptr is in the ‘malloc()-area’, PL_get_pointer() will get the pointer back.

int PL_put_float(term_t t, double f)
Put a floating-point value in the term reference.

int PL_put_functor(term_t t, functor_t functor)
Create a new compound term from functor and bind t to this term. All arguments of the term will be variables. To create a term with instantiated arguments, either instantiate the arguments using the PL_unify_*() functions or use PL_cons_functor().

int PL_put_list(term_t t)
Same as PL_put_functor(l, PL_new_functor(PL_new_atom(".")), 2)).

void PL_put_nil(term_t t)
Same as PL_put_atom_chars("[]").

void PL_put_term(term_t t1, term_t t2)
Make t1 point to the same term as t2.

int PL_cons_functor(term_t t, functor_t f, ...)
Create a term whose arguments are filled from a variable argument list holding the same number of term_t objects as the arity of the functor. To create the term animal(gnu, 50), use:

```c
{ term_t a1 = PL_new_term_ref();
  term_t a2 = PL_new_term_ref();
  term_t t = PL_new_term_ref();
  functor_t animal2;

  /* animal2 is a constant that may be bound to a global variable and re-used *
  */
  animal2 = PL_new_functor(PL_new_atom("animal"), 2);
  ```
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```c
PL_put_atom_chars(a1, "gnu");
PL_put_integer(a2, 50);
PL_cons_functor(t, animal2, a1, a2);
}
```

After this sequence, the term references $a1$ and $a2$ may be used for other purposes.

```c
int PL_cons_functor_v(term_t -h, functor_t f, term_t a0)
Create a compound term like PL_cons_functor(), but $a0$ is an array of term references
as returned by PL_new_termRefs(). The length of this array should match the number of
arguments required by the functor.

int PL_cons_list(term_t -l, term_t +h, term_t +t)
Create a list (cons-) cell in $l$ from the head $h$ and tail $t$. The code below creates a list of atoms
from a char **. The list is built tail-to-head. The PL_unify_*() functions can be used to
build a list head-to-tail.
```

```c
void put_list(term_t l, int n, char **words)
{ term_t a = PL_new_term_ref();

    PL_put_nil(l);
    while( --n >= 0 )
    { PL_put_atom_chars(a, words[n]);
        PL_cons_list(l, a, l);
    }
}
```

Note that $l$ can be redefined within a PL_cons_list call as shown here because operationally
its old value is consumed before its new value is set.

9.4.5 Unifying data

The functions of this section unify terms with other terms or translated C data structures. Except
for PL_unify(), these functions are specific to SWI-Prolog. They have been introduced because
they shorten the code for returning data to Prolog and at the same time make this more efficient by
avoiding the need to allocate temporary term references and reduce the number of calls to the Prolog
API. Consider the case where we want a foreign function to return the host name of the machine
Prolog is running on. Using the PL_get_*() and PL_put_*() functions, the code becomes:

```c
foreign_t
pl_hostname(term_t name)
{ char buf[100];

    if ( gethostname(buf, sizeof(buf)) )
    { term_t tmp = PL_new_term_ref();
```
Using `PL_unify_atom_chars()`, this becomes:

```c
foreign_t
pl_hostname(term_t name)
{ char buf[100];
    if ( gethostname(buf, sizeof(buf)) )
        return PL_unify_atom_chars(name, buf);
    PL_fail;
}
```

Note that unification functions that perform multiple bindings may leave part of the bindings in case of failure. See `PL_unify()` for details.

```c
int PL_unify(term_t ?t1, term_t ?t2)
    Unify two Prolog terms and return TRUE on success.
    Care is needed if PL_unify() returns FAIL and the foreign function does not immediately return to Prolog with FAIL. Unification may perform multiple changes to either t1 or t2. A failing unification may have created bindings before failure is detected. Already created bindings are not undone. For example, calling PL_unify() on a(X, a) and a(c, b) binds X to c and fails when trying to unify a to b. If control remains in C or even if we want to return success to Prolog, we must undo such bindings. This is achieved using `PL_open_foreign_frame()` and `PL_rewind_foreign_frame()`, as shown in the snippet below.

```c
    ( fid_t fid = PL_open_foreign_frame();
        ...
        if ( !PL_unify(t1, t2) )
            PL_rewind_foreign_frame(fid);  
        ...
        PL_close_foreign_frame(fid);
    }
```

In addition, `PL_unify()` may have failed on an exception, typically a resource (stack) overflow. This can be tested using `PL_exception()`, passing 0 (zero) for the query-id argument. Foreign functions that encounter an exception must return FAIL to Prolog as soon as possible or call `PL_clear_exception()` if they wish to ignore the exception.
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

int PL_unify_atom(term_t ?t, atom_t a)
   Unify t with the atom a and return non-zero on success.

int PL_unify_bool(term_t ?t, int a)
   Unify t with either true or false.

int PL_unify_chars(term_t ?t, int flags, size_t len, const char *chars)
   New function to deal with unification of char* with various encodings to a Prolog representation. The flags argument is a bitwise or specifying the Prolog target type and the encoding of chars. A Prolog type is one of PL_ATOM, PL_STRING, PL_CODE_LIST or PL_CHAR_LIST. A representation is one of REP_ISO_LATIN_1, REP_UTF8 or REP_MB. See PL_get_chars() for a definition of the representation types. If len is -1 chars must be zero-terminated and the length is computed from chars using strlen().

   If flags includes PL_DIFF_LIST and type is one of PL_CODE_LIST or PL_CHAR_LIST, the text is converted to a difference list. The tail of the difference list is t + 1.

int PL_unify_atom_chars(term_t ?t, const char *chars)
   Unify t with an atom created from chars and return non-zero on success.

int PL_unify_list_chars(term_t ?t, const char *chars)
   Unify t with a list of ASCII characters constructed from chars.

void PL_unify_string_chars(term_t ?t, const char *chars)
   Unify t with a Prolog string object created from the zero-terminated string chars. The data will be copied. See also PL_unify_string_nchars().

void PL_unify_string_nchars(term_t ?t, size_t len, const char *chars)
   Unify t with a Prolog string object created from the string created from the len/chars pair. The data will be copied. This interface can deal with 0-bytes in the string. See also section 9.4.20.

int PL_unify_integer(term_t ?t, intptr_t n)
   Unify t with a Prolog integer from n.

int PL_unify_int64(term_t ?t, int64_t n)
   Unify t with a Prolog integer from n.

int PL_unify_float(term_t ?t, double f)
   Unify t with a Prolog float from f.

int PL_unify_pointer(term_t ?t, void *ptr)
   Unify t with a Prolog integer describing the pointer. See also PL_put_pointer() and PL_get_pointer().

int PL_unify_functor(term_t ?t, functor_t f)
   If t is a compound term with the given functor, just succeed. If it is unbound, create a term and bind the variable, else fail. Note that this function does not create a term if the argument is already instantiated.

int PL_unify_list(term_t ?l, term_t -h, term_t -t)
   Unify l with a list-cell (. / 2). If successful, write a reference to the head of the list into h and a reference to the tail of the list into t. This reference may be used for subsequent calls.
to this function. Suppose we want to return a list of atoms from a `char **`. We could use the example described by `PL_put_list()`, followed by a call to `PL_unify()`, or we can use the code below. If the predicate argument is unbound, the difference is minimal (the code based on `PL_put_list()` is probably slightly faster). If the argument is bound, the code below may fail before reaching the end of the word list, but even if the unification succeeds, this code avoids a duplicate (garbage) list and a deep unification.

```c
foreign_t
pl_get_environ(term_t env)
{
    term_t l = PL_copy_term_ref(env);
    term_t a = PL_new_term_ref();
    extern char **environ;
    char **e;

    for(e = environ; *e; e++)
    {
        if ( !PL_unify_list(l, a, l) ||
            !PL_unify_atom_chars(a, *e) )
            PL_fail;
    }

    return PL_unify_nil(l);
}
```

```c
int PL_unify_nil(term_t ?l)
    Unify l with the atom [].

int PL_unify_arg(int index, term_t ?t, term_t ?a)
    Unifies the index-th argument (1-based) of t with a.

int PL_unify_term(term_t ?t, ...)
    Unify t with a (normally) compound term. The remaining arguments are a sequence of a type identifier followed by the required arguments. This predicate is an extension to the Quintus and SICStus foreign interface from which the SWI-Prolog foreign interface has been derived, but has proved to be a powerful and comfortable way to create compound terms from C. Due to the vararg packing/unpacking and the required type-switching this interface is slightly slower than using the primitives. Please note that some bad C compilers have fairly low limits on the number of arguments that may be passed to a function.

Special attention is required when passing numbers. C ‘promotes’ any integral smaller than `int` to `int`. That is, the types `char`, `short` and `int` are all passed as `int`. In addition, on most 32-bit platforms `int` and `long` are the same. Up to version 4.0.5, only `PL_INTEGER` could be specified, which was taken from the stack as `long`. Such code fails when passing small integral types on machines where `int` is smaller than `long`. It is advised to use `PL_SHORT`, `PL_INT` or `PL_LONG` as appropriate. Similarly, C compilers promote `float` to `double` and therefore `PL_FLOAT` and `PL_DOUBLE` are synonyms.

The type identifiers are:
PL_VARIABLE none
   No op. Used in arguments of PL_FUNCTOR.
PL_BOOL int
   Unify the argument with true or false.
PL_ATOM atom
   Unify the argument with an atom, as in PL_unify_atom().
PL_CHARS const char *
   Unify the argument with an atom constructed from the C char *, as in
   PL_unify_atom_chars().
PL_NCHARS size_t, const char *
   Unify the argument with an atom constructed from length and char* as in
   PL_unify_atom_nchars().
PL_UTF8_CHARS const char *
   Create an atom from a UTF-8 string.
PL_UTF8_STRING const char *
   Create a packed string object from a UTF-8 string.
PL_MBCCHARS const char *
   Create an atom from a multi-byte string in the current locale.
PL_MBCODES const char *
   Create a list of character codes from a multi-byte string in the current locale.
PL_MBSTRING const char *
   Create a packed string object from a multi-byte string in the current locale.
PL_NWCCHARS size_t, const wchar_t *
   Create an atom from a length and a wide character pointer.
PL_NWCODES size_t, const wchar_t *
   Create a list of character codes from a length and a wide character pointer.
PL_NWSTRING size_t, const wchar_t *
   Create a packed string object from a length and a wide character pointer.
PL_SHORT short
   Unify the argument with an integer, as in PL_unify_integer(). As short is pro-
   moted to int, PL_SHORT is a synonym for PL_INT.
PL_INTEGER long
   Unify the argument with an integer, as in PL_unify_integer().
PL_INT int
   Unify the argument with an integer, as in PL_unify_integer().
PL_LONG long
   Unify the argument with an integer, as in PL_unify_integer().
PL_INT64 int64_t
   Unify the argument with a 64-bit integer, as in PL_unify_int64().
PL_INTPTR intptr_t
   Unify the argument with an integer with the same width as a pointer. On most machines
   this is the same as PL_LONG, but on 64-bit MS-Windows pointers are 64 bits while longs
   are only 32 bits.
PL_DOUBLE double
Unify the argument with a float, as in PL_unify_float(). Note that, as the argument is passed using the C vararg conventions, a float must be casted to a double explicitly.

PL_FLOAT double
Unify the argument with a float, as in PL_unify_float().

PL_POINTER void *
Unify the argument with a pointer, as in PL_unify_pointer().

PL_STRING const char *
Unify the argument with a string object, as in PL_unify_string_chars().

PL_TERM term_t
Unify a subterm. Note this may be the return value of a PL_new_term_ref() call to get access to a variable.

PL_FUNCTOR functor_f, ...
Unify the argument with a compound term. This specification should be followed by exactly as many specifications as the number of arguments of the compound term.

PL_FUNCTOR_CHARS const char *name, int arity, ...
Create a functor from the given name and arity and then behave as PL_FUNCTOR.

PL_LIST int length, ...
Create a list of the indicated length. The remaining arguments contain the elements of the list.

For example, to unify an argument with the term language(dutch), the following skeleton may be used:

```c
static functor_t FUNCTOR_language1;

static void
init_constants()
{
  FUNCTOR_language1 = PL_new_functor(PL_new_atom("language"), 1);
}

foreign_t
pl_get_lang(term_t r)
{
  return PL_unify_term(r,
                        PL_FUNCTOR, FUNCTOR_language1,
                        PL_CHARS, "dutch");
}

install_t
install()
{
  PL_register_foreign("get_lang", 1, pl_get_lang, 0);
  init_constants();
}
```
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

int PL_chars_to_term(const char *chars, term_t *t)

Parse the string chars and put the resulting Prolog term into t. chars may or may not be closed using a Prolog full-stop (i.e., a dot followed by a blank). Returns FALSE if a syntax error was encountered and TRUE after successful completion. In addition to returning FALSE, the exception-term is returned in t on a syntax error. See also term_to_atom/2.

The following example builds a goal term from a string and calls it.

```c
int call_chars(const char *goal)
{
  fid_t fid = PL_open_foreign_frame();
  term_t g = PL_new_term_ref();
  BOOL rval;

  if ( PL_chars_to_term(goal, g) )
    rval = PL_call(goal, NULL);
  else
    rval = FALSE;

  PL_discard_foreign_frame(fid);
  return rval;
}

... call_chars("consult(load) ");
...
```

char * PL_quote(int chr, const char *string)

Return a quoted version of string. If chr is '\', the result is a quoted atom. If chr is '"', the result is a string. The result string is stored in the same ring of buffers as described with the BUF_RING argument of PL_get_chars();

In the current implementation, the string is surrounded by chr and any occurrence of chr is doubled. In the future the behaviour will depend on the character escapes Prolog flag.

9.4.6 Convenient functions to generate Prolog exceptions

The typical implementation of a foreign predicate first uses the PL_get_*() functions to extract C data types from the Prolog terms. Failure of any of these functions is normally because the Prolog term is of the wrong type. The *_ex() family of functions are wrappers around (mostly) the PL_get_*() functions, such that we can write code in the style below and get proper exceptions if an argument is uninstantiated or of the wrong type.

```c
//** set_size(+Name:atom, +Width:int, +Height:int) is det.

static foreign_t
set_size(term_t name, term_t width, term_t height)
{
  char *n;
  int w, h;
```
if ( !PL_get_chars(name, &n, CVT_ATOM|CVT_EXCEPTION) ||
    !PL_get_integer_ex(with, &w) ||
    !PL_get_integer_ex(height, &h) )
return FALSE;

...

int PL_get_atom_ex(term_t t, atom_t *a)
As PL_get_atom(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an atom.

int PL_get_integer_ex(term_t t, int *i)
As PL_get_integer(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an integer, or a representation error if the Prolog integer does not fit in a C int.

int PL_get_long_ex(term_t t, long *i)
As PL_get_long(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an atom, or a representation error if the Prolog integer does not fit in a C long.

int PL_get_int64_ex(term_t t, int64_t *i)
As PL_get_int64(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an atom, or a representation error if the Prolog integer does not fit in a C int64_t.

int PL_get_intptr_ex(term_t t, intptr_t *i)
As PL_get_intptr(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an atom, or a representation error if the Prolog integer does not fit in a C intptr_t.

int PL_get_size_ex(term_t t, size_t *i)
As PL_get_size(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an atom, or a representation error if the Prolog integer does not fit in a C size_t.

int PL_get_bool_ex(term_t t, int *i)
As PL_get_bool(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not an boolean.

int PL_get_float_ex(term_t t, double *f)
As PL_get_float(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not a float.

int PL_get_char_ex(term_t t, int *p, int eof)
Get a character code from t, where t is either an integer or an atom with length one. If eof is TRUE and t is -1, p is filled with -1. Raises an appropriate error if the conversion is not possible.

int PL_get_pointer_ex(term_t t, void **addrp)
As PL_get_pointer(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not a pointer.

int PL_get_list_ex(term_t l, term_t h, term_t t)
As PL_get_list(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not a list.
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int PL_get_nil_ex(term_t l)
   As PL_get_nil(), but raises a type or instantiation error if t is not the empty list.

int PL_unify_list_ex(term_t l, term_t h, term_t t)
   As PL_unify_list(), but raises a type error if t is not a variable, list-cell or the empty list.

int PL_unify_nil_ex(term_t l)
   As PL_unify_nil(), but raises a type error if t is not a variable, list-cell or the empty list.

int PL_unify_bool_ex(term_t t, int val)
   As PL_unify_bool(), but raises a type error if t is not a variable or a boolean.

   The second family of functions in this section simplifies the generation of ISO compatible error terms. Any foreign function that calls this function must return to Prolog with the return code of the error function or the constant FALSE. If available, these error functions add the name of the calling predicate to the error context. See also PL_raise_exception().

int PL_instantiation_error(term_t culprit)
   Raise instantiation_error. Culprit is ignored, but should be bound to the term that is not a variable. See instantiation_error/1.

int PL_uninstantiation_error(term_t culprit)
   Raise uninstantiation_error(culprit). This should be called if an argument that must be unbound at entry is bound to culprit.

int PL_representation_error(const char *resource)
   Raise representation_error(resource). See representation_error/1.

int PL_type_error(const char *expected, term_t culprit)
   Raise type_error(expected, culprit). See type_error/2.

int PL_domain_error(const char *expected, term_t culprit)
   Raise domain_error(expected, culprit). See domain_error/2.

int PL_existence_error(const char *type, term_t culprit)
   Raise existence_error(type, culprit). See type_error/2.

int PL_permission_error(const char *operation, const char *type, term_t culprit)
   Raise permission_error(operation, type, culprit). See permission_error/3.

int PL_resource_error(const char *resource)
   Raise resource_error(resource). See resource_error/1.

9.4.7 BLOBS: Using atoms to store arbitrary binary data

SWI-Prolog atoms as well as strings can represent arbitrary binary data of arbitrary length. This facility is attractive for storing foreign data such as images in an atom. An atom is a unique handle to this data and the atom garbage collector is able to destroy atoms that are no longer referenced by the Prolog engine. This property of atoms makes them attractive as a handle to foreign resources, such as Java atoms, Microsoft’s COM objects, etc., providing safe combined garbage collection.
To exploit these features safely and in an organised manner, the SWI-Prolog foreign interface allows for creating ‘atoms’ with additional type information. The type is represented by a structure holding C function pointers that tell Prolog how to handle releasing the atom, writing it, sorting it, etc. Two atoms created with different types can represent the same sequence of bytes. Atoms are first ordered on the rank number of the type and then on the result of the `compare()` function. Rank numbers are assigned when the type is registered.

**Defining a BLOB type**

The type `PL_blob_t` represents a structure with the layout displayed below. The structure contains additional fields at the …for internal bookkeeping as well as future extensions.

```c
typedef struct PL_blob_t
{
  uintptr_t magic;    /* PL_BLOB_MAGIC */
  uintptr_t flags;    /* Bitwise or of PL_BLOB_* */
  char * name;        /* name of the type */
  int (*release)(atom_t a);
  int (*compare)(atom_t a, atom_t b);
  int (*write)(IOSTREAM *s, atom_t a, int flags);
  void (*acquire)(atom_t a);
  ...
} PL_blob_t;
```

For each type, exactly one such structure should be allocated. Its first field must be initialised to `PL_BLOB_MAGIC`. The `flags` is a bitwise or of the following constants:

**PL_BLOB.TEXT**

If specified the blob is assumed to contain text and is considered a normal Prolog atom.

**PL_BLOB.UNIQUE**

If specified the system ensures that the blob-handle is a unique reference for a blob with the given type, length and content. If this flag is not specified, each lookup creates a new blob.

**PL_BLOB.NOCOPY**

By default the content of the blob is copied. Using this flag the blob references the external data directly. The user must ensure the provided pointer is valid as long as the atom lives. If `PL_BLOB.UNIQUE` is also specified, uniqueness is determined by comparing the pointer rather than the data pointed at.

The `name` field represents the type name as available to Prolog. See also `current_blob/2`. The other fields are function pointers that must be initialised to proper functions or `NULL` to get the default behaviour of built-in atoms. Below are the defined member functions:

```c
void acquire(atom_t a)
```

Called if a new blob of this type is created through `PL_put_blob()` or `PL_unify_blob()`. This callback may be used together with the release hook to deal with reference-counted external objects.
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int release(atom_t a)
   The blob (atom) a is about to be released. This function can retrieve the data of the blob using
   PL_blob_data(). If it returns FALSE the atom garbage collector will not reclaim the atom.

int compare(atom_t a, atom_t b)
   Compare the blobs a and b, both of which are of the type associated to this blob type. Return
   values are, as memcmp(), < 0 if a is less than b, = 0 if both are equal, and > 0 otherwise.

int write(Iostream *s, atom_t a, int flags)
   Write the content of the blob a to the stream s respecting the flags. The flags are a bitwise or of
   zero or more of the PL_WRT_* flags defined in SWI-Prolog.h. This prototype is available if
   the undocumented SWI-Stream.h is included before SWI-Prolog.h.

   If this function is not provided, write/1 emits the content of the blob for blobs of type
   PL_BLOB_TEXT or a string of the format <#hex data> for binary blobs.

   If a blob type is registered from a loadable object (shared object or DLL) the blob type must be
   deregistered before the object may be released.

int PL_unregister_blob_type(PL_blob_t *type)
   Unlink the blob type from the registered type and transform the type of possible living blobs
to unregistered, avoiding further reference to the type structure, functions referred by it,
as well as the data. This function returns TRUE if no blobs of this type existed and FALSE
otherwise. PL_unregister_blob_type() is intended for the uninstall() hook of foreign
modules, avoiding further references to the module.

Accessing blobs

The blob access functions are similar to the atom accessing functions. Blobs being atoms, the atom
functions operate on blobs and vice versa. For clarity and possible future compatibility issues, however, it is not advised to rely on this.

int PL_is_blob(term_t t, PL_blob_t **type)
   Succeeds if t refers to a blob, in which case type is filled with the type of the blob.

int PL_unify_blob(term_t t, void *blob, size_t len, PL_blob_t *type)
   Unify t to a new blob constructed from the given data and associated to the given type. See also
   PL_unify_atom_nchars().

int PL_put_blob(term_t t, void *blob, size_t len, PL_blob_t *type)
   Store the described blob in t. The return value indicates whether a new blob was allocated
   (FALSE) or the blob is a reference to an existing blob (TRUE). Reporting new/existing can be
   used to deal with external objects having their own reference counts. If the return is TRUE this
   reference count must be incremented, and it must be decremented on blob destruction callback.
   See also PL_put_atom_nchars().

int PL_get_blob(term_t t, void **blob, size_t *len, PL_blob_t **type)
   If t holds a blob or atom, get the data and type and return TRUE. Otherwise return FALSE.
   Each result pointer may be NULL, in which case the requested information is ignored.
void *\texttt{PL\_blob\_data(}\texttt{atom\_t a, size\_t *len, PL\_blob\_t **type})

Get the data and type associated to a blob. This function is mainly used from the callback
functions described in section 9.4.7.

9.4.8 Exchanging GMP numbers

If SWI-Prolog is linked with the GNU Multiple Precision Arithmetic Library (GMP, used by default),
the foreign interface provides functions for exchanging numeric values to GMP types. To access these
functions the header \texttt{<gmp.h>} must be included \texttt{before} \texttt{<SWI-Prolog.h>}. Foreign code using
GMP linked to SWI-Prolog asks for some considerations.

- SWI-Prolog normally rebinds the GMP allocation functions using \texttt{mp\_set\_memory\_functions()}.
  This means SWI-Prolog must be initialised before the foreign code touches any GMP function.
  You can call \texttt{\cfuncref{PL\_action}{PL\_GMP\_SET\_ALLOC\_FUNCTIONS, TRUE}} to force Prolog’s GMP initialization without doing the rest of the Prolog ini-
  tialization. If you do not want Prolog rebinding the GMP allocation, call
  \texttt{\cfuncref{PL\_action}{PL\_GMP\_SET\_ALLOC\_FUNCTIONS, FALSE}} \texttt{before}
  initializing Prolog.

- On Windows, each DLL has its own memory pool. To make exchange of GMP numbers be-
  tween Prolog and foreign code possible you must either let Prolog rebind the allocation func-
  tions (default) or you must recompile SWI-Prolog to link to a DLL version of the GMP library.

Here is an example exploiting the function \texttt{mpz\_nextprime()}:

```
#include <gmp.h>
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>

static foreign_t
next_prime(term_t n, term_t prime)
{
  mpz_t mpz;
  int rc;

  mpz_init(mpz);
  if ( PL_get_mpz(n, mpz) )
  {
    mpz_nextprime(mpz, mpz);
    rc = PL_unify_mpz(prime, mpz);
  }
  else
    rc = FALSE;

  mpz_clear(mpz);
  return rc;
}

install_t
install()
```
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```c
{ PL_register_foreign("next_prime", 2, next_prime, 0);
}
```

```c
int PL_getmpz(term_t t, mpz_t mpz)
    If t represents an integer, mpz is filled with the value and the function returns TRUE. Otherwise
    mpz is untouched and the function returns FALSE. Note that mpz must have been initialised
    before calling this function and must be cleared using mpz_clear() to reclaim any storage
    associated with it.
```

```c
int PL_getmpq(term_t t, mpq_t mpq)
    If t is an integer or rational number (term rdiv/2), mpq is filled with the normalised rational
    number and the function returns TRUE. Otherwise mpq is untouched and the function returns
    FALSE. Note that mpq must have been initialised before calling this function and must be
    cleared using mpq_clear() to reclaim any storage associated with it.
```

```c
int PL_unifympz(term_t t, mpz_t mpz)
    Unify t with the integer value represented by mpz and return TRUE on success. The mpz
    argument is not changed.
```

```c
int PL_unifympq(term_t t, mpq_t mpq)
    Unify t with a rational number represented by mpq and return TRUE on success. Note that t is
    unified with an integer if the denominator is 1. The mpq argument is not changed.
```

9.4.9 Calling Prolog from C

The Prolog engine can be called from C. There are two interfaces for this. For the first, a term is
created that could be used as an argument to call/1, and then PL_call() is used to call Prolog.
This system is simple, but does not allow to inspect the different answers to a non-deterministic goal
and is relatively slow as the runtime system needs to find the predicate. The other interface is based on
PL_open_query(), PL_next_solution() and PL_cut_query() or PL_close_query().
This mechanism is more powerful, but also more complicated to use.

Predicate references

This section discusses the functions used to communicate about predicates. Though a Prolog predicate
may be defined or not, redefined, etc., a Prolog predicate has a handle that is neither destroyed nor
moved. This handle is known by the type `predicate_t`.

```c
predicate_t PL_pred(funcor_t f, module_t m)
    Return a handle to a predicate for the specified name/arity in the given module. This function
    always succeeds, creating a handle for an undefined predicate if no handle was available. If the
    module argument m is NULL, the current context module is used.
```

```c
predicate_t PL_predicate(const char *name, int arity, const char* module)
    Same as PL_pred(), but provides a more convenient interface to the C programmer.
```

```c
void PL_predicate_info(predicate_t p, atom_t *n, int *a, module_t *m)
    Return information on the predicate p. The name is stored over n, the arity over a, while m
```
receives the definition module. Note that the latter need not be the same as specified with \texttt{PL\_predicate()}. If the predicate is imported into the module given to \texttt{PL\_predicate()}, this function will return the module where the predicate is defined. Any of the arguments \(n\), \(a\) and \(m\) can be \texttt{NULL}.

**Initiating a query from C**

This section discusses the functions for creating and manipulating queries from C. Note that a foreign context can have at most one active query. This implies that it is allowed to make strictly nested calls between C and Prolog (Prolog calls C, calls Prolog, calls C, etc.), but it is not allowed to open multiple queries and start generating solutions for each of them by calling \texttt{PL\_next\_solution()}. Be sure to call \texttt{PL\_cut\_query()} or \texttt{PL\_close\_query()} on any query you opened before opening the next or returning control back to Prolog.

\begin{verbatim}
qid_t PL_open_query(module_t ctx, int flags, predicate_t p, term_t +t0)
  Opens a query and returns an identifier for it. \textit{ctx} is the context module of the goal. When \texttt{NULL}, the context module of the calling context will be used, or \texttt{user} if there is no calling context (as may happen in embedded systems). Note that the context module only matters for meta-predicates. See \texttt{meta\_predicate/1}, \texttt{context\_module/1} and \texttt{module\_transparent/1}. The \textit{p} argument specifies the predicate, and should be the result of a call to \texttt{PL\_pred()} or \texttt{PL\_predicate()}. Note that it is allowed to store this handle as global data and reuse it for future queries. The term reference \texttt{t0} is the first of a vector of term references as returned by \texttt{PL\_new\_term\_refs(n)}.
  
  The \textit{flags} arguments provides some additional options concerning debugging and exception handling. It is a bitwise or of the following values:

  \begin{description}
  \item[PL\_Q\_NORMAL] Normal operation. The debugger inherits its settings from the environment. If an exception occurs that is not handled in Prolog, a message is printed and the tracer is started to debug the error.\textsuperscript{4}
  \item[PL\_Q\_NODEBUG] Switch off the debugger while executing the goal. This option is used by many calls to hook-predicates to avoid tracing the hooks. An example is \texttt{print/1} calling \texttt{portray/1} from foreign code.
  \item[PL\_Q\_CATCH\_EXCEPTION] If an exception is raised while executing the goal, do not report it, but make it available for \texttt{PL\_exception()}.\textsuperscript{4}
  \item[PL\_Q\_PASS\_EXCEPTION] As \texttt{PL\_Q\_CATCH\_EXCEPTION}, but do not invalidate the exception-term while calling \texttt{PL\_close\_query()}. This option is experimental.
  \end{description}

  \texttt{PL\_open\_query()} can return the query identifier ‘0’ if there is not enough space on the environment stack. This function succeeds, even if the referenced predicate is not defined. In
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{4}Do not pass the integer 0 for normal operation, as this is interpreted as \texttt{PL\_Q\_NODEBUG} for backward compatibility reasons.
this case, running the query using \texttt{PL\_next\_solution()} will return an existence_error. See \texttt{PL\_exception()}.

The example below opens a query to the predicate \texttt{is\_a/2} to find the ancestor of ‘me’. The reference to the predicate is valid for the duration of the process and may be cached by the client.

```c
char *
ancestor(const char *me)
{
  term_t a0 = PL\_new\_term\_refs(2);
  static predicate_t p;

  if ( !p )
    p = PL\_predicate("is\_a", 2, "database");

  PL\_put\_atom\_chars(a0, me);
  PL\_open\_query(NULL, PL\_Q\_NORMAL, p, a0);
  ...
}
```

\begin{verbatim}
int PL\_next\_solution(qid_t qid)
Generate the first (next) solution for the given query. The return value is TRUE if a solution was found, or FALSE to indicate the query could not be proven. This function may be called repeatedly until it fails to generate all solutions to the query.

void PL\_cut\_query(qid_t qid)
Discards the query, but does not delete any of the data created by the query. It just invalidates \texttt{qid}, allowing for a new call to \texttt{PL\_open\_query()} in this context.

void PL\_close\_query(qid_t qid)
As \texttt{PL\_cut\_query()}, but all data and bindings created by the query are destroyed.

int PL\_call\_predicate(module_t m, int flags, predicate_t pred, term_t +t0)
Shorthand for \texttt{PL\_open\_query()}, \texttt{PL\_next\_solution()}, \texttt{PL\_cut\_query()}, generating a single solution. The arguments are the same as for \texttt{PL\_open\_query()}, the return value is the same as \texttt{PL\_next\_solution()}.

int PL\_call(term_t t, module_t m)
Call term \texttt{t} just like the Prolog predicate \texttt{once/1}. \texttt{t} is called in the module \texttt{m}, or in the context module if \texttt{m} \( \text{==} \) NULL. Returns TRUE if the call succeeds, FALSE otherwise. Figure 9.3 shows an example to obtain the number of defined atoms. All checks are omitted to improve readability.

9.4.10 Discarding Data

The Prolog data created and term references needed to set up the call and/or analyse the result can in most cases be discarded right after the call. \texttt{PL\_close\_query()} allows for destroying the data, while leaving the term references. The calls below may be used to destroy term references and data. See figure 9.3 for an example.

\end{verbatim}
int count_atoms()
{
    fid_t fid = PL_open_foreign_frame();
    term_t goal = PL_new_term_ref();
    term_t a1 = PL_new_term_ref();
    term_t a2 = PL_new_term_ref();
    functor_t s2 = PL_new_functor(PL_new_atom("statistics"), 2);
    int atoms;

    PL_put_atom_chars(a1, "atoms");
    PL_cons_functor(goal, s2, a1, a2);
    PL_call(goal, NULL); /* call it in current module */

    PL_get_integer(a2, &atoms);
    PL_discard_foreign_frame(fid);

    return atoms;
}

Figure 9.3: Calling Prolog

fid_t PL_open_foreign_frame()

Create a foreign frame, holding a mark that allows the system to undo bindings and destroy
data created after it, as well as providing the environment for creating term references. This
function is called by the kernel before calling a foreign predicate.

void PL_close_foreign_frame(fid_t id)

Discard all term references created after the frame was opened. All other Prolog data is re-
tained. This function is called by the kernel whenever a foreign function returns control back
to Prolog.

void PL_discard_foreign_frame(fid_t id)

Same as PL_close_foreign_frame(), but also undo all bindings made since the open and
destroy all Prolog data.

void PL_rewind_foreign_frame(fid_t id)

Undo all bindings and discard all term references created since the frame was created, but do
not pop the frame. That is, the same frame can be rewound multiple times, and must eventually
be closed or discarded.

It is obligatory to call either of the two closing functions to discard a foreign frame. Foreign
frames may be nested.

9.4.11 Foreign Code and Modules

Modules are identified via a unique handle. The following functions are available to query and ma-
nipulate modules.
module_t PL_context()
   Return the module identifier of the context module of the currently active foreign predicate.

int PL_strip_module(term_t +raw, module_t *m, term_t -plain)
   Utility function. If raw is a term, possibly holding the module construct ⟨module⟩: ⟨rest⟩, this function will make plain a reference to ⟨rest⟩ and fill module * with ⟨module⟩. For further nested module constructs the innermost module is returned via module *. If raw is not a module construct, raw will simply be put in plain. The value pointed to by m must be initialized before calling PL_strip_module(), either to the default module or to NULL. A NULL value is replaced by the current context module if raw carries no module. The following example shows how to obtain the plain term and module if the default module is the user module:

```c
{ module m = PL_new_module(PL_new_atom("user"));
   term_t plain = PL_new_term_ref();
   
   PL_strip_module(term, &m, plain);
   ...
}
```

atom_t PL_module_name(module_t module)
   Return the name of module as an atom.

module_t PL_new_module(atom_t name)
   Find an existing module or create a new module with the name name.

### 9.4.12 Prolog exceptions in foreign code

This section discusses PL_exception(), PL_throw() and PL_raise_exception(), the interface functions to detect and generate Prolog exceptions from C code. PL_throw() and PL_raise_exception() from the C interface raise an exception from foreign code. PL_throw() exploits the C function longjmp() to return immediately to the innermost PL_next_solution(). PL_raise_exception() registers the exception term and returns FALSE. If a foreign predicate returns FALSE, while an exception term is registered, a Prolog exception will be raised by the virtual machine.

Calling these functions outside the context of a function implementing a foreign predicate results in undefined behaviour.

PL_exception() may be used after a call to PL_next_solution() fails, and returns a term reference to an exception term if an exception was raised, and 0 otherwise.

If a C function implementing a predicate calls Prolog and detects an exception using PL_exception(), it can handle this exception or return with the exception. Some caution is required though. It is not allowed to call PL_close_query() or PL_discard_foreign_frame() afterwards, as this will invalidate the exception term. Below is the code that calls a Prolog-defined arithmetic function (see arithmetic_function/1).

If PL_next_solution() succeeds, the result is analysed and translated to a number, after which the query is closed and all Prolog data created after PL_open_foreign_frame() is destroyed. On the other hand, if PL_next_solution() fails and if an exception was raised, just pass it. Otherwise generate an exception (PL_error()) is an internal call for building the standard
error terms and calling \texttt{PL\_raise\_exception()}. After this, the Prolog environment should be discarded using \texttt{PL\_cut\_query()} and \texttt{PL\_close\_foreign\_frame()} to avoid invalidating the exception term.

```c
static int
prologFunction(ArithFunction f, term_t av, Number r)
{
    int arity = f->proc->definition->functor->arity;
    fid_t fid = PL_open_foreign_frame();
    qid_t qid;
    int rval;

    qid = PL_open_query(NULL, PL_Q_NORMAL, f->proc, av);
    if ( PL_next_solution(qid) )
    {
        rval = valueExpression(av+arity-1, r);
        PL_close_query(qid);
        PL_discard_foreign_frame(fid);
    } else
    {
        term_t except;
        if ( (except = PL_exception(qid)) )
        {
            rval = PL_throw(except); /* pass exception */
        } else
        {
            char *name = stringAtom(f->proc->definition->functor->name);

            /* generate exception */
            rval = PL_error(name, arity-1, NULL, ERR_FAILED, f->proc);
        }  
        PL_cut_query(qid); /* donot destroy data */
        PL_close_foreign_frame(fid); /* same */
    }

    return rval;
}
```

\textbf{int \texttt{PL\_raise\_exception(term\_t\ exception)}}

Generate an exception (as \texttt{throw/1}) and return FALSE. Below is an example returning an exception from a foreign predicate:

```c
foreign_t
pl_hello(term_t to)
{
    char *s;

    if ( PL_get_atom_chars(to, &s) )
    {  
        printf("Hello \"%s\"\n", s);
    }
```

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```c
PL_succeed;
} else
{
  term_t except = PL_new_term_ref();

  PL_unify_term(except,
               PL_FUNCTOR_CHARS, "type_error", 2,
               PL_CHARS, "atom",
               PL_TERM, to);

  return PL_raise_exception(except);
}
```

int PL_throw(term_t exception)

Similar to PL_raise_exception(), but returns using the C longjmp() function to the innermost PL_next_solution().

term_t PL_exception(qid_t qid)

If PL_next_solution() fails, this can be due to normal failure of the Prolog call, or because an exception was raised using throw/1. This function returns a handle to the exception term if an exception was raised, or 0 if the Prolog goal simply failed. If there is an exception, PL_exception() allocates a term-handle using PL_new_term_ref() that is used to return the exception term.

Additionally, `cfuncref{PL_exception}{0}` returns the pending exception in the current query or 0 if no exception is pending. This can be used to check the error status after a failing call to, e.g., one of the unification functions.

void PL_clear_exception(void)

Tells Prolog that the encountered exception must be ignored. This function must be called if control remains in C after a previous API call fails with an exception.5

9.4.13 Catching Signals (Software Interrupts)

SWI-Prolog offers both a C and Prolog interface to deal with software interrupts (signals). The Prolog mapping is defined in section 4.11. This subsection deals with handling signals from C.

If a signal is not used by Prolog and the handler does not call Prolog in any way, the native signal interface routines may be used.

Some versions of SWI-Prolog, notably running on popular Unix platforms, handle SIG_SEGV for guarding the Prolog stacks. If the application wishes to handle this signal too, it should use PL_signal() to install its handler after initialising Prolog. SWI-Prolog will pass SIG_SEGV to the user code if it detected the signal is not related to a Prolog stack overflow.

Any handler that wishes to call one of the Prolog interface functions should call PL_signal() for its installation.

5This feature is non-portable. Other Prolog systems (e.g., YAP) have no facilities to ignore raised exceptions, and the design of YAP’s exception handling does not support such a facility.
void (*)() PL_signal(sig, func)
This function is equivalent to the BSD-Unix signal() function, regardless of the platform used. The signal handler is blocked while the signal routine is active, and automatically reactivated after the handler returns.

After a signal handler is registered using this function, the native signal interface redirects the signal to a generic signal handler inside SWI-Prolog. This generic handler validates the environment, creates a suitable environment for calling the interface functions described in this chapter and finally calls the registered user-handler.

By default, signals are handled asynchronously (i.e., at the time they arrive). It is inherently dangerous to call extensive code fragments, and especially exception related code from asynchronous handlers. The interface allows for synchronous handling of signals. In this case the native OS handler just schedules the signal using PL_raise(), which is checked by PL_handle_signals() at the call- and redo-port. This behaviour is realised by or-ing sig with the constant PL_SIGSYNC.6

Signal handling routines may raise exceptions using PL_raise_exception(). The use of PL_throw() is not safe. If a synchronous handler raises an exception, the exception is delayed to the next call to PL_handle_signals();

int PL_raise(int sig)
Register sig for synchronous handling by Prolog. Synchronous signals are handled at the call-port or if foreign code calls PL_handle_signals(). See also thread_signal/2.

int PL_handle_signals(void)
Handle any signals pending from PL_raise(). PL_handle_signals() is called at each pass through the call- and redo-port at a safe point. Exceptions raised by the handler using PL_raise_exception() are properly passed to the environment.

The user may call this function inside long-running foreign functions to handle scheduled interrupts. This routine returns the number of signals handled. If a handler raises an exception, the return value is -1 and the calling routine should return with FALSE as soon as possible.

int PL_get_signum_ex(term t, int *sig)
Extract a signal specification from a Prolog term and store as an integer signal number in sig. The specification is an integer, a lowercase signal name without SIG or the full signal name. These refer to the same: 9, kill and SIGKILL. Leaves a typed, domain or instantiation error if the conversion fails.

9.4.14 Miscellaneous

Term Comparison

int PL_compare(term t1, term t2)
Compares two terms using the standard order of terms and returns -1, 0 or 1. See also compare/3.

int PL_same_compound(term t1, term t2)
Yields TRUE if t1 and t2 refer to physically the same compound term and FALSE otherwise.

6 A better default would be to use synchronous handling, but this interface preserves backward compatibility.
Recorded database

In some applications it is useful to store and retrieve Prolog terms from C code. For example, the XPCE graphical environment does this for storing arbitrary Prolog data as slot-data of XPCE objects.

Please note that the returned handles have no meaning at the Prolog level and the recorded terms are not visible from Prolog. The functions `PL_recorded()` and `PL_erase()` are the only functions that can operate on the stored term.

Two groups of functions are provided. The first group (`PL_record()` and friends) store Prolog terms on the Prolog heap for retrieval during the same session. These functions are also used by `recorda/3` and friends. The recorded database may be used to communicate Prolog terms between threads.

```c
record_t PL_record(term t +t)
Record the term t into the Prolog database as recorda/3 and return an opaque handle to the term. The returned handle remains valid until `PL_erase()` is called on it. `PL_recorded()` is used to copy recorded terms back to the Prolog stack.
```

```c
int PL_recorded(record_t record, term t -t)
Copy a recorded term back to the Prolog stack. The same record may be used to copy multiple instances at any time to the Prolog stack. Returns TRUE on success, and FALSE if there is not enough space on the stack to accommodate the term. See also `PL_record()` and `PL_erase()`.
```

```c
void PL_erase(record_t record)
Remove the recorded term from the Prolog database, reclaiming all associated memory resources.
```

The second group (headed by `PL_record_external()`) provides the same functionality, but the returned data has properties that enable storing the data on an external device. It has been designed to make it possible to store Prolog terms fast and compact in an external database. Here are the main features:

- **Independent of session**
  Records can be communicated to another Prolog session and made visible using `PL_recorded_external()`.

- **Binary**
  The representation is binary for maximum performance. The returned data may contain zero bytes.

- **Byte-order independent**
  The representation can be transferred between machines with different byte order.

- **No alignment restrictions**
  There are no memory alignment restrictions and copies of the record can thus be moved freely. For example, it is possible to use this representation to exchange terms using shared memory between different Prolog processes.

- **Compact**
  It is assumed that a smaller memory footprint will eventually outperform slightly faster representations.
• Stable
  The format is designed for future enhancements without breaking compatibility with older records.

  ```
  char * PL_record_external(term t, size *len)
  ```

  Record the term t into the Prolog database as recorda/3 and return an opaque handle to the term. The returned handle remains valid until PL_erase_external() is called on it.

  It is allowed to copy the data and use PL_recorded_external() on the copy. The user is responsible for the memory management of the copy. After copying, the original may be discarded using PL_erase_external().

  PL_recorded_external() is used to copy such recorded terms back to the Prolog stack.

  ```
  int PL_recorded_external(const char *record, term t)
  ```

  Copy a recorded term back to the Prolog stack. The same record may be used to copy multiple instances at any time to the Prolog stack. See also PL_record_external() and PL_erase_external().

  ```
  int PL_erase_external(char *record)
  ```

  Remove the recorded term from the Prolog database, reclaiming all associated memory resources.

Getting file names

The function PL_get_file_name() provides access to Prolog filenames and its file-search mechanism described with absolute_file_name/3. Its existence is motivated to realise a uniform interface to deal with file properties, search, naming conventions, etc., from foreign code.

  ```
  int PL_get_file_name(term spec, char **name, int flags)
  ```

  Translate a Prolog term into a file name. The name is stored in the static buffer ring described with PL_get_chars() option BUF_RING. Conversion from the internal UNICODE encoding is done using standard C library functions. flags is a bit-mask controlling the conversion process. Options are:

  ```
  PL_FILE_ABSOLUTE
    Return an absolute path to the requested file.
  ```

  ```
  PL_FILE_OSPATH
    Return the name using the hosting OS conventions. On MS-Windows, \ is used to separate directories rather than the canonical /.
  ```

  ```
  PL_FILE_SEARCH
    Invoke absolute_file_name/3. This implies rules from file_search_path/2 are used.
  ```

  ```
  PL_FILE_EXIST
    Demand the path to refer to an existing entity.
  ```

  ```
  PL_FILE_READ
    Demand read-access on the result.
  ```

  ```
  PL_FILE_WRITE
    Demand write-access on the result.
  ```
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PL_FILE_EXECUTE
   Demand execute-access on the result.

PL_FILE_NOERRORS
   Do not raise any exceptions.

int PL_get_file_nameW(term_t spec, wchar_t **name, int flags)
   Same as PL_get_file_name(), but returns the filename as a wide-character string. This
   is intended for Windows to access the Unicode version of the Win32 API. Note that the flag
   PL_FILE_OSPATH must be provided to fetch a filename in OS native (e.g., C:\x\y) notation.

9.4.15 Errors and warnings

PL_warning() prints a standard Prolog warning message to the standard error (user_error)
stream. Please note that new code should consider using PL_raise_exception() to raise a Prolog
exception. See also section 4.10.

int PL_warning(format, a1, ...)  
   Print an error message starting with ‘[WARNING: ’, followed by the output from format,
   followed by a ‘]’ and a newline. Then start the tracer. format and the arguments are the same
   as for printf(2). Always returns FALSE.

9.4.16 Environment Control from Foreign Code

int PL_action(int, ...)
   Perform some action on the Prolog system. int describes the action. Remaining arguments
   depend on the requested action. The actions are listed below:

   PL_ACTION_TRACE
      Start Prolog tracer (trace/0). Requires no arguments.

   PL_ACTION_DEBUG
      Switch on Prolog debug mode (debug/0). Requires no arguments.

   PL_ACTION_BACKTRACE
      Print backtrace on current output stream. The argument (an int) is the number of frames
      printed.

   PL_ACTION_HALT
      Halt Prolog execution. This action should be called rather than Unix exit() to give Prolog
      the opportunity to clean up. This call does not return. The argument (an int) is the exit
      code. See halt/1.

   PL_ACTION_ABORT
      Generate a Prolog abort (abort/0). This call does not return. Requires no arguments.

   PL_ACTION_BREAK
      Create a standard Prolog break environment (break/0). Returns after the user types the
      end-of-file character. Requires no arguments.

   PL_ACTION_GUIAPP
      Windows: Used to indicate to the kernel that the application is a GUI application if the
      argument is not 0, and a console application if the argument is 0. If a fatal error occurs,
the system uses a windows messagebox to report this on a GUI application, and otherwise simply prints the error and exits.

**PL\_ACTION\_WRITE**
Write the argument, a char * to the current output stream.

**PL\_ACTION\_FLUSH**
Flush the current output stream. Requires no arguments.

**PL\_ACTION\_ATTACH\_CONSOLE**
Attach a console to a thread if it does not have one. See attach\_console/0.

**PL\_GMP\_SET\_ALLOC\_FUNCTIONS**
Takes an integer argument. If TRUE, the GMP allocations are immediately bound to the Prolog functions. If FALSE, SWI-Prolog will never rebind the GMP allocation functions. See mp\_set\_memory\_functions() in the GMP documentation. The action returns FALSE if there is no GMP support or GMP is already initialised.

```c
int PL_backtrace(int depth, int flags)
Print a Prolog backtrace to the standard error stream. The depth argument specifies the maximum number of frames to print. The flags argument is a bitwise or of the constants PL_BT_SAFE (0x1) and PL_BT_USER (0x2). PL_BT_SAFE causes frames not to be printed as normal Prolog goals, but using the predicate, program counter and clause-number. For example, the dump below indicates the frame is executing the 2nd clause of $autoload:load_library_index_p/0 at program pointer 25. This can be interpreted by dumping the virtual machine code using vm\_list/1.

[34] $autoload:load_library_index_p/0 [PC=19 in clause 2]
```

If the constant PL_BT_USER is specified, ‘no-debug’ frames are ignored. This predicate may be used from the C-debugger (e.g., gdb) to get the Prolog stack at a crash location. Here is an example dumping the top 20 frames of the Prolog stack.

```
(gdb) call PL_backtrace(20,0)
```

### 9.4.17 Querying Prolog

**long PL\_query(int)**
Obtain status information on the Prolog system. The actual argument type depends on the information required. int describes what information is wanted. The options are given in table 9.1.

### 9.4.18 Registering Foreign Predicates

**int PL\_register\_foreign\_in\_module(char *mod, char *name, int arity, foreign_t (*f)(), int flags, ...)**
Register the C function f to implement a Prolog predicate. After this call returns successfully a predicate with name name (a char *) and arity arity (a C int) is created in module mod. If

7Returning pointers and integers as a long is bad style. The signature of this function should be changed.
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_ARGC</td>
<td>Return an integer holding the number of arguments given to Prolog from Unix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_ARGV</td>
<td>Return a char ** holding the argument vector given to Prolog from Unix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_SYMBOLFILE</td>
<td>Return a char * holding the current symbol file of the running process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_MAX_INTEGER</td>
<td>Return a long, representing the maximal integer value represented by a Prolog integer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_MIN_INTEGER</td>
<td>Return a long, representing the minimal integer value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_VERSION</td>
<td>Return a long, representing the version as $10,000 \times M + 100 \times m + p$, where $M$ is the major, $m$ the minor version number and $p$ the patch level. For example, 20717 means 2.7.17.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_ENCODING</td>
<td>Return the default stream encoding of Prolog (of type IOENC).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_QUERY_USER_CPU</td>
<td>Get amount of user CPU time of the process in milliseconds.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9.1: PL_query() options

*mod* is NULL, the predicate is created in the module of the calling context, or if no context is present in the module *user*.

When called in Prolog, Prolog will call *function*. *flags* form a bitwise or’ed list of options for the installation. These are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PL_FA_META</td>
<td>Provide meta-predicate info (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_FA_TRANSPARENT</td>
<td>Predicate is module transparent (deprecated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_FA_NONDETERMINISTIC</td>
<td>Predicate is non-deterministic. See also PL_retry().</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_FA_NOTRACE</td>
<td>Predicate cannot be seen in the tracer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL_FA_VARARGS</td>
<td>Use alternative calling convention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If PL_FA_META is provided, PL_register_foreign_in_module() takes one extra argument. This argument is of type const char*. This string must be exactly as long as the number of arguments of the predicate and filled with characters from the set 0-9:ˆ-+?. See meta_predicate/1 for details. PL_FA_TRANSPARENT is implied if at least one meta-argument is provided (0-9:ˆ). Note that meta-arguments are not always passed as ⟨module⟩:⟨term⟩. Always use PL_strip_module() to extract the module and plain term from a meta-argument.\(^8\)

Predicates may be registered either before or after PL_initialise(). When registered before initialisation the registration is recorded and executed after installing the system predicates and before loading the saved state.

Default calling (i.e. without PL_FA_VARARGS) *function* is passed the same number of *term_t*

---

\(^8\)It is encouraged to pass an additional NULL pointer for non-meta-predicates.
arguments as the arity of the predicate and, if the predicate is non-deterministic, an extra argument of type control_t (see section 9.4.1). If PL_FA_VARARGS is provided, function is called with three arguments. The first argument is a term_t handle to the first argument. Further arguments can be reached by adding the offset (see also PL_new_term_ref()). The second argument is the arity, which defines the number of valid term references in the argument vector. The last argument is used for non-deterministic calls. It is currently undocumented and should be defined of type void*. Here is an example:

```c
static foreign_t
atom_checksum(term_t a0, int arity, void* context)
{ char *s;
  if ( PL_get_atom_chars(a0, &s) )
  { int sum;
    for(sum=0; *s; s++)
      sum += *s&0xff;
    return PL_unify_integer(a0+1, sum&0xff);
  }
  return FALSE;
}

install_t
install()
{ PL_register_foreign("atom_checksum", 2,
    atom_checksum, PL_FA_VARARGS);
}
```

int PL_register_foreign(const char *name, int arity, foreign_t (*function)(), int flags, ...)
Same as PL_register_foreign_in_module(), passing NULL for the module.

void PL_register_extensions_in_module(const char *module, PL_extension *e)
Register a series of predicates from an array of definitions of the type PL_extension in the given module. If module is NULL, the predicate is created in the module of the calling context, or if no context is present in the module user. The PL_extension type is defined as

```c
typedef struct PL_extension
{ char *predicate_name; /* Name of the predicate */
  short arity; /* Arity of the predicate */
  pl_function_t function; /* Implementing functions */
  short flags; /* Or of PL_FA__... */
} PL_extension;
```

For details, see PL_register_foreign_in_module(). Here is an example of its usage:
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```c
static PL_extension predicates[] = {
    { "foo", 1, pl_foo, 0 },
    { "bar", 2, pl_bar, PL_FA_NONDETERMINISTIC },
    { NULL, 0, NULL, 0 }
};

main(int argc, char **argv)
{ PL_register_extensions_in_module("user", predicates);
    if ( !PL_initialise(argc, argv) )
        PL_halt(1);
...
}
```

```c
void PL_register_extensions( PL_extension *e)
    Same as PL_register_extensions_in_module() using NULL for the module argument.

9.4.19 Foreign Code Hooks

For various specific applications some hooks are provided.

```c
typedef int ( *PL_dispatch_hook_t)(void);
void PL_abort_hook(PL_abort_hook_t)
    Install a hook when abort/0 is executed. SWI-Prolog abort/0 is implemented using C setjmp()/longjmp() construct. The hooks are executed in the reverse order of their registration after the longjmp() took place and before the Prolog top-level is reinvoked. The type PL_abort_hook_t is defined as:
    typedef void (*PL_abort_hook_t)(void);
int PL_abort_unhook(PL_abort_hook_t)
    Remove a hook installed with PL_abort_hook(). Returns FALSE if no such hook is found, TRUE otherwise.
```
void PL_on_halt(void (*f)(int, void *), void *closure)

Register the function \( f \) to be called if SWI-Prolog is halted. The function is called with two arguments: the exit code of the process (0 if this cannot be determined on your operating system) and the \( closure \) argument passed to the \texttt{PL_on_halt}() call. See also \texttt{at_halt/1}.

\texttt{PL_agc_hook_t PL_agc_hook(PL_agc_hook_t new)}

Register a hook with the atom-garbage collector (see \texttt{garbage_collect_atoms/0}) that is called on any atom that is reclaimed. The old hook is returned. If no hook is currently defined, \texttt{NULL} is returned. The argument of the called hook is the atom that is to be garbage collected. The return value is an \texttt{int}. If the return value is zero, the atom is \texttt{not} reclaimed. The hook may invoke any Prolog predicate.

The example below defines a foreign library for printing the garbage collected atoms for debugging purposes.

```c
#include <SWI-Stream.h>
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>

static int
atom_hook(atom_t a)
{
    Sdpprintf("AGC: deleting %s\n", PL_atom_chars(a));

    return TRUE;
}

static PL_agc_hook_t old;

install_t
install()
{
    old = PL_agc_hook(atom_hook);
}

install_t
uninstall()
{
    PL_agc_hook(old);
}
```

### 9.4.20 Storing foreign data

When combining foreign code with Prolog, it can be necessary to make data represented in the foreign language available to Prolog. For example, to pass it to another foreign function. At the end of this section, there is a partial implementation of using foreign functions to manage bit-vectors. Another example is the SGML/XML library that manages a ‘parser’ object, an object that represents the current state of the parser and that can be directed to perform actions such as parsing a document or make queries about the document content.

This section provides some hints for handling foreign data in Prolog. There are four options for storing such data:
9.4. THE FOREIGN INCLUDE FILE

- **Natural Prolog data**
  Uses the representation one would choose if no foreign interface was required. E.g., a bitvector representing a list of small integers can be represented as a Prolog list of integers.

- **Opaque packed data on the stacks**
  It is possible to represent the raw binary representation of the foreign object as a Prolog string (see section 4.23). Strings may be created from foreign data using `PL_put_string_nchars()` and retrieved using `PL_get_string_chars()`. It is good practice to wrap the string in a compound term with arity 1, so Prolog can identify the type. The hook `portray/1` rules may be used to streamline printing such terms during development.

- **Opaque packed data in a blob**
  Similar to the above solution, binary data can be stored in an atom. The blob interface (section 9.4.7) provides additional facilities to assign a type and hook-functions that act on creation and destruction of the underlying atom.

- **Natural foreign data, passed as a pointer**
  An alternative is to pass a pointer to the foreign data. Again, the pointer is often wrapped in a compound term.

The choice may be guided using the following distinctions

- **Is the data opaque to Prolog**
  With ‘opaque’ data, we refer to data handled in foreign functions, passed around in Prolog, but where Prolog never examines the contents of the data itself. If the data is opaque to Prolog, the selection will be driven solely by simplicity of the interface and performance.

- **What is the lifetime of the data**
  With ‘lifetime’ we refer to how it is decided that the object is (or can be) destroyed. We can distinguish three cases:

  1. The object must be destroyed on backtracking and normal Prolog garbage collection (i.e., it acts as a normal Prolog term). In this case, representing the object as a Prolog string (second option above) is the only feasible solution.

  2. The data must survive Prolog backtracking. This leaves two options. One is to represent the object using a pointer and use explicit creation and destruction, making the programmer responsible. The alternative is to use the blob-interface, leaving destruction to the (atom) garbage collector.

  3. The data lives as during the lifetime of a foreign function that implements a predicate. If the predicate is deterministic, foreign automatic variables are suitable. If the predicate is non-deterministic, the data may be allocated using `malloc()` and a pointer may be passed. See section 9.4.1.

**Examples for storing foreign data**

In this section, we outline some examples, covering typical cases. In the first example, we will deal with extending Prolog’s data representation with integer sets, represented as bit-vectors. Then, we discuss the outline of the DDE interface.
Integer sets with not-too-far-apart upper- and lower-bounds can be represented using bit-vectors. Common set operations, such as union, intersection, etc., are reduced to simple and’ing and or’ing the bit-vectors. This can be done using Prolog’s unbounded integers.

For really demanding applications, foreign representation will perform better, especially time-wise. Bit-vectors are naturally expressed using string objects. If the string is wrapped in bitvector/1, the lower-bound of the vector is 0 and the upper-bound is not defined; an implementation for getting and putting the sets as well as the union predicate for it is below.

```c
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>
#define max(a, b) ((a) > (b) ? (a) : (b))
#define min(a, b) ((a) < (b) ? (a) : (b))

static functor_t FUNCTOR_bitvector1;

static int
get_bitvector(term_t in, int *len, unsigned char **data)
{ if ( PL_is_functor(in, FUNCTOR_bitvector1) )
    { term_t a = PL_new_term_ref();

      PL_get_arg(1, in, a);
      return PL_get_string(a, (char **)data, len);
    }

  PL_fail;
}

static int
unify_bitvector(term_t out, int len, const unsigned char *data)
{ if ( PL_unify_functor(out, FUNCTOR_bitvector1) )
    { term_t a = PL_new_term_ref();

      PL_get_arg(1, out, a);
      return PL_unify_string_nchars(a, len, (const char *)data);
    }

  PL_fail;
}

static foreign_t
pl_bitvector_union(term_t t1, term_t t2, term_t u)
{ unsigned char *s1, *s2;
  int l1, l2;

  if ( get_bitvector(t1, &l1, &s1) &&
       get_bitvector(t2, &l2, &s2) )
```
{ int l = max(l1, l2);
    unsigned char *s3 = alloca(l);

    if (s3)
    {
        int n;
        int ml = min(l1, l2);

        for(n=0; n<ml; n++)
            s3[n] = s1[n] | s2[n];
        for( ; n < l1; n++)
            s3[n] = s1[n];
        for( ; n < l2; n++)
            s3[n] = s2[n];

        return unify_bitvector(u, l, s3);
    }

    return PL_warning("Not enough memory");
}

PL_fail;
}

install_t
install()
{
    PL_register_foreign("bitvector_union", 3, pl_bitvector_union, 0);

    FUNCTOR_bitvector1 = PL_new_functor(PL_new_atom("bitvector"), 1);
}

The DDE interface (see section 4.41) represents another common usage of the foreign interface: providing communication to new operating system features. The DDE interface requires knowledge about active DDE server and client channels. These channels contains various foreign data types. Such an interface is normally achieved using an open/close protocol that creates and destroys a handle. The handle is a reference to a foreign data structure containing the relevant information.

There are a couple of possibilities for representing the handle. The choice depends on responsibilities and debugging facilities. The simplest approach is to use PL_unify_pointer() and PL_get_pointer(). This approach is fast and easy, but has the drawbacks of (untyped) pointers: there is no reliable way to detect the validity of the pointer, nor to verify that it is pointing to a structure of the desired type. The pointer may be wrapped into a compound term with arity 1 (i.e., dde_channel(⟨Pointer⟩)), making the type-problem less serious.

Alternatively (used in the DDE interface), the interface code can maintain a (preferably variable length) array of pointers and return the index in this array. This provides better protection. Especially for debugging purposes, wrapping the handle in a compound is a good suggestion.
### 9.4.21 Embedding SWI-Prolog in other applications

With embedded Prolog we refer to the situation where the ‘main’ program is not the Prolog application. Prolog is sometimes embedded in C, C++, Java or other languages to provide logic based services in a larger application. Embedding loads the Prolog engine as a library to the external language. Prolog itself only provides for embedding in the C language (compatible with C++). Embedding in Java is achieved using JPL using a C-glue between the Java and Prolog C interfaces.

The most simple embedded program is below. The interface function `PL_initialise()` must be called before any of the other SWI-Prolog foreign language functions described in this chapter, except for `PL_initialise_hook()`, `PL_new_atom()`, `PL_new_functor()` and `PL_register_foreign()`. `PL_initialise()` interprets all the command line arguments, except for the `-t toplevel` flag that is interpreted by `PL_toplevel()`.

```c
#include <stdlib.h>

int
main(int argc, char **argv)
{
  #ifdef READLINE /* Remove if you don’t want readline */
    PL_initialise_hook(install_readline);
  #endif

  if ( !PL_initialise(argc, argv) )
      PL_halt(1);

  PL_halt(PL_toplevel() ? 0 : 1);
}

int PL_initialise(int argc, char **argv)
{

  Initialises the SWI-Prolog heap and stacks, restores the Prolog state, loads the system and personal initialisation files, runs the `at_initialization/1` hooks and finally runs the `-g goal` hook.

  Special consideration is required for `argv[0]`. On Unix, this argument passes the part of the command line that is used to locate the executable. Prolog uses this to find the file holding the running executable. The Windows version uses this to find a module of the running executable. If the specified module cannot be found, it tries the module `libpl.dll`, containing the Prolog runtime kernel. In all these cases, the resulting file is used for two purposes:

  - See whether a Prolog saved state is appended to the file. If this is the case, this state will be loaded instead of the default `boot.prc` file from the SWI-Prolog home directory. See also `gsave_program/[1,2]` and section 9.5.
  - Find the Prolog home directory. This process is described in detail in section 9.6.

  `PL_initialise()` returns 1 if all initialisation succeeded and 0 otherwise.\(^9\)

  In most cases, `argc` and `argv` will be passed from the main program. It is allowed to create your own argument vector, provided `argv[0]` is constructed according to the rules above. For example:

\(^9\)BUG: Various fatal errors may cause `PL_initialise()` to call `PL_halt(1)`, preventing it from returning at all.
int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char *av[10];
    int ac = 0;

    av[ac++] = argv[0];
    av[ac++] = "-x";
    av[ac++] = "mystate";
    av[ac] = NULL;

    if ( !PL_initialise(ac, av) )
        PL_halt(1);
    ...
}

Please note that the passed argument vector may be referred from Prolog at any time and should therefore be valid as long as the Prolog engine is used.

A good setup in Windows is to add SWI-Prolog’s bin directory to your PATH and either pass a module holding a saved state, or "libpl.dll" as argv[0]. If the Prolog state is attached to a DLL (see the -dll option of swipl-ld), pass the name of this DLL.

int PL_is_initialised(int *argc, char ***argv)
Test whether the Prolog engine is already initialised. Returns FALSE if Prolog is not initialised and TRUE otherwise. If the engine is initialised and argc is not NULL, the argument count used with PL_initialise() is stored in argc. Same for the argument vector argv.

void PL_install_readline()
Installs the GNU readline line editor. Embedded applications that do not use the Prolog toplevel should normally delete this line, shrinking the Prolog kernel significantly. Note that the Windows version does not use GNU readline.

int PL_toplevel()
Runs the goal of the -t toplevel switch (default prolog/0) and returns 1 if successful, 0 otherwise.

int PL_cleanup(int status)
This function performs the reverse of PL_initialise(). It runs the PL_on_halt() and at_halt/1 handlers, closes all streams (except for the ‘standard I/O’ streams which are flushed only), deallocates all memory and restores all signal handlers. The status argument is passed to the various termination hooks and indicates the exit-status.

The function returns TRUE if successful and FALSE otherwise. Currently, FALSE is returned when an attempt is made to call PL_cleanup() recursively or if PL_cleanup() is not called from the main thread.

In theory, this function allows deleting and restarting the Prolog system in the same process. In practice, SWI-Prolog’s cleanup process is far from complete, and trying to revive the system using PL_initialise() will leak memory in the best case. It can also crash the application.
In this state, there is little practical use for this function. If you want to use Prolog temporarily, consider running it in a separate process. If you want to be able to reset Prolog, your options are (again) a separate process, modules or threads.

```c
void PL.cleanup_fork()
Close file descriptors associated to Prolog streams except for 0, 1 and 2. Stop intervaltimer that may be running on behalf of profile/1. The call is intended to be used in combination with fork():

```c
if ( (pid=fork()) == 0 )
{ PL_cleanup_fork();
 <some exec variation>
}
```

The call behaves the same on Windows, though there is probably no meaningful application.

```c
int PL.halt(int status)
Clean up the Prolog environment using PL_cleanup() and call exit() with the status argument. As PL_cleanup() can only be called from the main thread, this function returns FALSE when called from a thread other than the main one.
```

**Threading, Signals and embedded Prolog**

This section applies to Unix-based environments that have signals or multi-threading. The Windows version is compiled for multi-threading, and Windows lacks proper signals.

We can distinguish two classes of embedded executables. There are small C/C++-programs that act as an interfacing layer around Prolog. Most of these programs can be replaced using the normal Prolog executable extended with a dynamically loaded foreign extension and in most cases this is the preferred route. In other cases, Prolog is embedded in a complex application that—like Prolog—wants to control the process environment. A good example is Java. Embedding Prolog is generally the only way to get these environments together in one process image. Java applications, however, are by nature multi-threaded and appear to do signal handling (software interrupts).

On Unix systems, SWI-Prolog uses three signals:

- **SIGUSR1** is used to synchronise atom and clause garbage collection. The handler is installed at the start of garbage collection and reverted to the old setting after completion.
- **SIGUSR2** has an empty signal handler. This signal is sent to a thread after sending a thread-signal (see thread_signal/2). It causes blocking system calls to return with EINTR, which gives them the opportunity to react to thread-signals.
- **SIGINT** is used by the top-level to activate the tracer (typically bound to control-C). The first control-C posts a request for starting the tracer in a safe, synchronous fashion. If control-C is hit again before the safe route is executed, it prompts the user whether or not a forced interrupt is desired.

The **--nosignals** option can be used to inhibit processing of SIGINT. The other signals are vital for the functioning of SWI-Prolog. If they conflict with other applications, signal handling of either component must be modified. The SWI-Prolog signals are defined in pl-thread.h of the source distribution.

---

10 BUG: Eventually it may become possible to call PL.halt() from any thread.
9.5 Linking embedded applications using swipl-ld

The utility program \texttt{swipl-ld} (Win32: \texttt{swipl-ld.exe}) may be used to link a combination of C files and Prolog files into a stand-alone executable. \texttt{swipl-ld} automates most of what is described in the previous sections.

In normal usage, a copy is made of the default embedding template \ldots /\texttt{swipl/include/stub.c}. The main() routine is modified to suit your application. \texttt{PL initialise()} must be passed the program name (\texttt{argv[0]}) (Win32: the executing program can be obtained using GetModuleName()). The other elements of the command line may be modified. Next, \texttt{swipl-ld} is typically invoked as:

\begin{verbatim}
swipl-ld -o output stubfile.c [other-c-or-o-files] [plfiles]
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{swipl-ld} will first split the options into various groups for both the C compiler and the Prolog compiler. Next, it will add various default options to the C compiler and call it to create an executable holding the user’s C code and the Prolog kernel. Then, it will call the SWI-Prolog compiler to create a saved state from the provided Prolog files and finally, it will attach this saved state to the created emulator to create the requested executable.

Below, it is described how the options are split and which additional options are passed.

- \texttt{-help}
  Print brief synopsis.

- \texttt{-pl prolog}
  Select the Prolog to use. This Prolog is used for two purposes: get the home directory as well as the compiler/linker options and create a saved state of the Prolog code.

- \texttt{-ld linker}
  Linker used to link the raw executable. Default is to use the C compiler (Win32: \texttt{link.exe}).

- \texttt{-cc C compiler}
  Compiler for .c files found on the command line. Default is the compiler used to build SWI-Prolog accessible through the Prolog flag \texttt{c_cc} (Win32: \texttt{cl.exe}).

- \texttt{-c++ C++-compiler}
  Compiler for C++ source file (extensions .cpp, .cxx, .cc or .C) found on the command line. Default is \texttt{c++} or \texttt{g++} if the C compiler is \texttt{gcc} (Win32: \texttt{cl.exe}).

- \texttt{-nostate}
  Just relink the kernel, do not add any Prolog code to the new kernel. This is used to create a new kernel holding additional foreign predicates on machines that do not support the shared-library (DLL) interface, or if building the state cannot be handled by the default procedure used by \texttt{swipl-ld}. In the latter case the state is created separately and appended to the kernel using \texttt{cat \langle kernel\rangle \langle state\rangle > \langle out\rangle} (Win32: \texttt{copy /b \langle kernel\rangle+\langle state\rangle \langle out\rangle}).

- \texttt{-shared}
  Link C, C++ or object files into a shared object (DLL) that can be loaded by the \texttt{load_foreign_library/1} predicate. If used with \texttt{-c} it sets the proper options to compile a C or C++ file ready for linking into a shared object.
-dll
   *Windows* only. Embed SWI-Prolog into a DLL rather than an executable.

-c
   Compile C or C++ source files into object files. This turns *swipl-ld* into a replacement for the C or C++ compiler, where proper options such as the location of the include directory are passed automatically to the compiler.

-E
   Invoke the C preprocessor. Used to make *swipl-ld* a replacement for the C or C++ compiler.

-pl-options,...
   Additional options passed to Prolog when creating the saved state. The first character immediately following *pl-options* is used as separator and translated to spaces when the argument is built. Example: *-pl-options,-F,xpce* passes *-F xpce* as additional flags to Prolog.

-ld-options,...
   Passes options to the linker, similar to *-pl-options*.

-cc-options,...
   Passes options to the C/C++ compiler, similar to *-pl-options*.

-v
   Select verbose operation, showing the various programs and their options.

-o outfile
   Reserved to specify the final output file.

-1library
   Specifies a library for the C compiler. By default, *-1swipl* (Win32: *libpl.lib*) and the libraries needed by the Prolog kernel are given.

-Llibrary-directory
   Specifies a library directory for the C compiler. By default the directory containing the Prolog C library for the current architecture is passed.

-g | -Iinclude-directory | -Ddefinition
   These options are passed to the C compiler. By default, the include directory containing SWI-Prolog.h is passed. *swipl-ld* adds two additional *-Ddef* flags:

   -D_SWI_PROLOG_
      Indicates the code is to be connected to SWI-Prolog.

   -D_SWI_EMBEDDED_
      Indicates the creation of an embedded program.

*.o | *.c | *.C | *.cxx | *.cpp
   Passed as input files to the C compiler.

*.pl | *.qlf
   Passed as input files to the Prolog compiler to create the saved state.

* All other options. These are passed as linker options to the C compiler.
9.5.1 A simple example

The following is a very simple example going through all the steps outlined above. It provides an arithmetic expression evaluator. We will call the application calc and define it in the files calc.c and calc.pl. The Prolog file is simple:

```prolog
calc(Atom) :-
    term_to_atom(Expr, Atom),
    A is Expr,
    write(A),
    nl.
```

The C part of the application parses the command line options, initialises the Prolog engine, locates the `calc/1` predicate and calls it. The coder is in figure 9.4.

The application is now created using the following command line:

```
% swipl-ld -o calc calc.c calc.pl
```

The following indicates the usage of the application:

```
% calc pi/2
1.5708
```

9.6 The Prolog ‘home’ directory

Executables embedding SWI-Prolog should be able to find the ‘home’ directory of the development environment unless a self-contained saved state has been added to the executable (see `qsave_program/1,2` and section 9.5).

If Prolog starts up, it will try to locate the development environment. To do so, it will try the following steps until one succeeds:

1. If the `--home=DIR` is provided, use this.
2. If the environment variable `SWI_HOME=DIR` is defined and points to an existing directory, use this.
3. If the environment variable `SWIPL` is defined and points to an existing directory, use this.
4. Locate the primary executable or (Windows only) a component (module) thereof and check whether the parent directory of the directory holding this file contains the file `swipl`. If so, this file contains the (relative) path to the home directory. If this directory exists, use this. This is the normal mechanism used by the binary distribution.
5. If the precompiled path exists, use it. This is only useful for a source installation.

If all fails and there is no state attached to the executable or provided Windows module (see `PL_initialise()`), SWI-Prolog gives up. If a state is attached, the current working directory is used.

The `file_search_path/2` alias `swi` is set to point to the home directory located.
```c
#include <stdio.h>
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>

#define MAXLINE 1024

int main(int argc, char **argv)
{
    char expression[MAXLINE];
    char *e = expression;
    char *program = argv[0];
    char *plav[2];
    int n;

    /* combine all the arguments in a single string */
    for(n=1; n<argc; n++)
    {
        if ( n != 1 )
            *e++ = ' ';
        strcpy(e, argv[n]);
        e += strlen(e);
    }

    /* make the argument vector for Prolog */
    plav[0] = program;
    plav[1] = NULL;

    /* initialise Prolog */
    if ( !PL_initialise(1, plav) )
        PL_halt(1);

    /* Lookup calc/1 and make the arguments and call */
    { predicate_t pred = PL_predicate("calc", 1, "user");
      term_t h0 = PL_new_term_refs(1);
      int rval;

      PL_put_atom_chars(h0, expression);
      rval = PL_call_predicate(NULL, PL_Q_NORMAL, pred, h0);

      PL_halt(rval ? 0 : 1);
    }

    return 0;
}
```

Figure 9.4: C source for the calc application
9.7  Example of Using the Foreign Interface

Below is an example showing all stages of the declaration of a foreign predicate that transforms atoms possibly holding uppercase letters into an atom only holding lowercase letters. Figure 9.5 shows the C source file, figure 9.6 illustrates compiling and loading of foreign code.

```c
/* Include file depends on local installation */
#include <SWI-Prolog.h>
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <string.h>
#include <ctype.h>

foreign_t
pl_lowercase(term_t u, term_t l)
{
  char *copy;
  char *s, *q;
  int rval;

  if ( !PL_get_atom_chars(u, &s) )
    return PL_warning("lowercase/2: instantiation fault");
  copy = malloc(strlen(s)+1);

  for( q=copy; *s; q++, s++)
    *q = (isupper(*s) ? tolower(*s) : *s);
  *q = '\0';

  rval = PL_unify_atom_chars(l, copy);
  free(copy);

  return rval;
}

install_t
install()
{
  PL_register_foreign("lowercase", 2, pl_lowercase, 0);
}
```

Figure 9.5: Lowercase source file
% gcc -I/usr/local/lib/swipl-\plversion/include -fpic -c lowercase.c
% gcc -shared -o lowercase.so lowercase.o
% swipl
Welcome to SWI-Prolog (Version \plversion)
...

1 ?- load_foreign_library(lowercase).
true.

2 ?- lowercase('Hello World!', L).
L = 'hello world!'.

Figure 9.6: Compiling the C source and loading the object file
9.8 Notes on Using Foreign Code

9.8.1 Memory Allocation

SWI-Prolog’s heap memory allocation is based on the `malloc(3)` library routines. SWI-Prolog provides the functions below as a wrapper around malloc(). Allocation errors in these functions trap SWI-Prolog’s fatal-error handler, in which case `PL_malloc()` or `PL_realloc()` do not return.

Portable applications must use `PL_free()` to release strings returned by `PL_get_chars()` using the `BUF_MALLOC` argument. Portable applications may use both `PL_malloc()` and friends or malloc() and friends but should not mix these two sets of functions on the same memory.

```c
void * PL_malloc(size_t bytes)
    Allocate bytes of memory. On failure SWI-Prolog’s fatal-error handler is called and `PL_malloc()` does not return. Memory allocated using these functions must use `PL_realloc()` and `PL_free()` rather than realloc() and free().

void * PL_realloc(void *mem, size_t size)
    Change the size of the allocated chunk, possibly moving it. The `mem` argument must be obtained from a previous `PL_malloc()` or `PL_realloc()` call.

void PL_free(void *mem)
    Release memory. The `mem` argument must be obtained from a previous `PL_malloc()` or `PL_realloc()` call.
```

Boehm-GC support

To accommodate future use of the Boehm garbage collector\(^\text{11}\) for heap memory allocation, the interface provides the functions described below. Foreign extensions that wish to use the Boehm-GC facilities can use these wrappers. Please note that if SWI-Prolog is not compiled to use Boehm-GC (default), the user is responsible for calling `PL_free()` to reclaim memory.

```c
void* PL_malloc_atomic(size_t bytes)
void* PL_malloc_uncollectable(size_t bytes)
void* PL_malloc_atomic_uncollectable(size_t bytes)
    If Boehm-GC is not used, these are all the same as `PL_malloc()`. With Boehm-GC, these map to the corresponding Boehm-GC functions. Atomic means that the content should not be scanned for pointers, and uncollectable means that the object should never be garbage collected.

void* PL_malloc_stubborn(size_t bytes)
void PL_end_stubborn_change(void *memory)
    These functions allow creating objects, promising GC that the content will not change after `PL_end_stubborn_change()`.
```

9.8.2 Compatibility between Prolog versions

Great care is taken to ensure binary compatibility of foreign extensions between different Prolog versions. Only the much less frequently used stream interface has been responsible for binary incompatibilities.

\(^{11}\)\url{http://www.hpl.hp.com/personal/Hans_Boehm/gc/}
Source code that relies on new features of the foreign interface can use the macro \texttt{PLVERSION} to find the version of \texttt{SWI-Prolog.h} and \texttt{PL_query()} using the option \texttt{PL\_QUERY\_VERSION} to find the version of the attached Prolog system. Both follow the same numbering schema explained with \texttt{PL_query()}. 

\subsection*{9.8.3 Debugging and profiling foreign code (valgrind)}

This section is only relevant for Unix users on platforms supported by valgrind. Valgrind is an excellent binary instrumentation platform. Unlike many other instrumentation platforms, valgrind can deal with code loaded through \texttt{dlopen()}. The \texttt{callgrind} tool can be used to profile foreign code loaded under SWI-Prolog. Compile the foreign library adding \texttt{-g} option to \texttt{gcc} or \texttt{swipl-ld}. By setting the environment variable \texttt{VALGRIND} to \texttt{yes}, SWI-Prolog will \textit{not} release loaded shared objects using \texttt{dlclose()}. This trick is required to get source information on the loaded library. Without, valgrind claims that the shared object has no debugging information.\footnote{Tested using valgrind version 3.2.3 on x64.} Here is the complete sequence using \texttt{bash} as login shell:

\begin{verbatim}
% VALGRIND=yes valgrind --tool=callgrind pl <args>
<prolog interaction>
% kcachegrind callgrind.out.<pid>
\end{verbatim}

\subsection*{9.8.4 Name Conflicts in C modules}

In the current version of the system all public C functions of SWI-Prolog are in the symbol table. This can lead to name clashes with foreign code. Someday I should write a program to strip all these symbols from the symbol table (why does Unix not have that?). For now I can only suggest you give your function another name. You can do this using the C preprocessor. If—for example—you foreign package uses a function \texttt{warning()}, which happens to exist in SWI-Prolog as well, the following macro should fix the problem:

\begin{verbatim}
#define warning warning_
\end{verbatim}

Note that shared libraries do not have this problem as the shared library loader will only look for symbols in the main executable for symbols that are not defined in the library itself.

\subsection*{9.8.5 Compatibility of the Foreign Interface}

The term reference mechanism was first used by Quintus Prolog version 3. SICStus Prolog version 3 is strongly based on the Quintus interface. The described SWI-Prolog interface is similar to using the Quintus or SICStus interfaces, defining all foreign-predicate arguments of type \texttt{+term}. SWI-Prolog explicitly uses type \texttt{functor\_t}, while Quintus and SICStus use \texttt{⟨name⟩} and \texttt{⟨arity⟩}. As the names of the functions differ from Prolog to Prolog, a simple macro layer dealing with the names can also deal with this detail. For example:

\begin{verbatim}
#define QP_put_functor(t, n, a) \ 
   PL_put_functor(t, PL_new_functor(n, a))
\end{verbatim}

\footnote{Tested using valgrind version 3.2.3 on x64.}
The `PL_unify_*()` functions are lacking from the Quintus and SICStus interface. They can easily be emulated, or the put/unify approach should be used to write compatible code.

The `PL_open_foreign_frame()/PL_close_foreign_frame()` combination is lacking from both other Prologs. SICStus has `PL_new_term_ref(0)`, followed by `PL_reset_term_refs()`, that allows for discarding term references.

The Prolog interface for the graphical user interface package XPCE shares about 90% of the code using a simple macro layer to deal with different naming and calling conventions of the interfaces.
This chapter describes the features of SWI-Prolog for delivering applications that can run without the development version of the system installed.

A SWI-Prolog runtime executable is a file consisting of two parts. The first part is the emulator, which is machine-dependent. The second part is the resource archive, which contains the compiled program in a machine-independent format, startup options and possibly user-defined resources; see resource/3 and open_resource/3.

These two parts can be connected in various ways. The most common way for distributed runtime applications is to concatenate the two parts. This can be achieved using external commands (Unix: cat, Windows: copy), or using the stand_alone option to qsave_program/2. The second option is to attach a startup script in front of the resource that starts the emulator with the proper options. This is the default under Unix. Finally, an emulator can be told to use a specified resource file using the -x command-line switch.

qsave_program(+File, +Options)

Saves the current state of the program to the file File. The result is a resource archive containing a saved state that expresses all Prolog data from the running program and all user-defined resources. Depending on the stand_alone option, the resource is headed by the emulator, a Unix shell script or nothing. Options is a list of additional options:

local(+KBytes)
Limit for the local stack. See section 2.4.1.

global(+KBytes)
Limit for the global stack. See section 2.4.1.

trail(+KBytes)
Limit for the trail stack. See section 2.4.1.

goal(:Callable)
Initialization goal for the new executable (see -g).

toplevel(:Callable)
Top-level goal for the new executable (see -t).

init_file(+Atom)
Default initialization file for the new executable. See -f.

class(+Class)
If runtime, only read resources from the state (default). If kernel, lock all predicates as system predicates. If development, save the predicates in their current state and keep reading resources from their source (if present). See also resource/3.

autoload(+Boolean)
If true (default), run autoload/0 first.
map(+File)
   Dump a human-readable trace of what has been saved in File.

op(+Action)
   One of save (default) to save the current operator table or standard to use the initial
table of the emulator.

stand_alone(+Boolean)
   If true, the emulator is the first part of the state. If the emulator is started it will test
whether a boot-file (state) is attached to the emulator itself and load this state. Provided
the application has all libraries loaded, the resulting executable is completely independent
of the runtime environment or location where it was built. See also section 2.10.2.

emulator(+File)
   File to use for the emulator. Default is the running Prolog image.

foreign(+Action)
   If save, include shared objects (DLLs) into the saved state. See
current_foreign_library/2. If the program strip is available, this is first used
to reduce the size of the shared object. If a state is started, use_foreign_library/1
first tries to locate the foreign resource in the executable. When found it copies the
content of the resource to a temporary file and loads it. If possible (Unix), the temporary
object is deleted immediately after opening.¹

qsave_program(+File)
   Equivalent to qsave_program(File, []).

autoload
   Check the current Prolog program for predicates that are referred to, are undefined and have a
definition in the Prolog library. Load the appropriate libraries.

   This predicate is used by qsave_program/[1, 2] to ensure the saved state does not depend
on availability of the libraries. The predicate autoload/0 examines all clauses of the loaded
program (obtained with clause/2) and analyses the body for referenced goals. Such an anal-
ysis cannot be complete in Prolog, which allows for the creation of arbitrary terms at runtime
and the use of them as a goal. The current analysis is limited to the following:

   • Direct goals appearing in the body
   • Arguments of declared meta-predicates that are marked with an integer (0..9). See
meta_predicate/1.

   The analysis of meta-predicate arguments is limited to cases where the argument appears liter-
ally in the clause or is assigned using =/2 before the meta-call. That is, the following fragment
is processed correctly:

   ...
   Goal = prove(Theory),
   forall(current_theory(Theory),
       Goal)),

¹This option is experimental and currently disabled by default. It will become the default if it proves robust.
But, the calls to `prove_simple(Theory)` and `prove_complex(Theory)` in the example below are not discovered by the analysis and therefore the modules that define these predicates must be loaded explicitly using `use_module/1`.2.

```prolog
...,
  member(Goal, [ prove_simple(Theory),
                  prove_complex(Theory) ]),
  forall(current_theory(Theory),
         Goal)),
```

It is good practice to use `gxref/0` to make sure that the program has sufficient declarations such that the analysis tools can verify that all required predicates can be resolved and that all code is called. See `meta_predicate/1`, `dynamic/1`, `public/1` and `prolog:called_by/2`.

`volatile +Name/Arity, …`

Declare that the clauses of specified predicates should not be saved to the program. The volatile declaration is normally used to prevent the clauses of dynamic predicates that represent data for the current session from being saved in the state file.

## 10.1 Limitations of qsave_program

There are three areas that require special attention when using `qsave_program/[1,2]`.

- If the program is an embedded Prolog application or uses the foreign language interface, care has to be taken to restore the appropriate foreign context. See section 10.2 for details.
- If the program uses directives (`:- goal. lines`) that perform other actions than setting predicate attributes (dynamic, volatile, etc.) or loading files (consult, etc.), the directive may need to be prefixed with `initialization/1`.
- Database references as returned by `clause/3`, `recorded/3`, etc., are not preserved and may thus not be part of the database when saved.

## 10.2 Runtimes and Foreign Code

Some applications may need to use the foreign language interface. Object code is by definition machine-dependent and thus cannot be part of the saved program file.

To complicate the matter even further there are various ways of loading foreign code:

- **Using the library(shlib) predicates**
  This is the preferred way of dealing with foreign code. It loads quickly and ensures an acceptable level of independence between the versions of the emulator and the foreign code loaded. It works on Unix machines supporting shared libraries and library functions to load them. Most modern Unixes, as well as Win32 (Windows 95/NT), satisfy this constraint.
10.3. USING PROGRAM RESOURCES

- **Static linking**
  This mechanism works on all machines, but generally requires the same C compiler and linker to be used for the external code as is used to build SWI-Prolog itself.

To make a runtime executable that can run on multiple platforms one must make runtime checks to find the correct way of linking. Suppose we have a source file `myextension.c` defining the installation function `install()`.

If this file is compiled into a shared library, `load_foreign_library/1` will load this library and call the installation function to initialise the foreign code. If it is loaded as a static extension, define `install()` as the predicate `install/0`:

```prolog
static foreign_t
pl_install()
{
  install();

  PL_succeed;
}

PL_extension PL_extensions [] =
{
  /*{ "name", arity, function, PL_FA_<flags> },*/

  { "install", 0, pl_install, 0 },
  { NULL, 0, NULL, 0 } /* terminating line */
};
```

Now, use the following Prolog code to load the foreign library:

```prolog
load_foreign_extensions :-
    current_predicate(install, install), !, % static loaded install.
load_foreign_extensions :- % shared library
    load_foreign_library(foreign(myextension)).
:- initialization load_foreign_extensions.
```

The path alias `foreign` is defined by `file_search_path/2`. By default it searches the directories `⟨home⟩/lib/⟨arch⟩` and `⟨home⟩/lib`. The application can specify additional rules for `file_search_path/2`.

### 10.3 Using program resources

A *resource* is very similar to a file. Resources, however, can be represented in two different formats: on files, as well as part of the resource *archive* of a saved state (see `qsave_program/2`).

A resource has a *name* and a *class*. The *source* data of the resource is a file. Resources are declared by declaring the predicate `resource/3`. They are accessed using the predicate `open_resource/3`. 
Before going into details, let us start with an example. Short texts can easily be expressed in Prolog source code, but long texts are cumbersome. Assume our application defines a command 'help' that prints a helptext to the screen. We put the content of the helptext into a file called help.txt. The following code implements our help command such that help.txt is incorporated into the runtime executable.

```prolog
resource(help, text, 'help.txt').

help :-
    open_resource(help, text, In),
    call_cleanup(copy_stream_data(In, user_output),
                 close(In)).
```

The predicate `help/0` opens the resource as a Prolog stream. If we are executing this from the development environment, this will actually return a stream to the file `help.txt` itself. When executed from the saved state, the stream will actually be a stream opened on the program resource file, taking care of the offset and length of the resource.

### 10.3.1 Predicate Definitions

#### resource(+Name, +Class, +FileSpec)

This predicate is defined as a dynamic predicate in the module `user`. Clauses for it may be defined in any module, including the user module. `Name` is the name of the resource (an atom). A resource name may contain any character, except for `$` and `:` which are reserved for internal usage by the resource library. `Class` describes the kind of object stored in the resource. In the current implementation, it is just an atom. `FileSpec` is a file specification that may exploit `file_search_path/2` (see `absolute_file_name/2`).

Normally, resources are defined as unit clauses (facts), but the definition of this predicate also allows for rules. For proper generation of the saved state, it must be possible to enumerate the available resources by calling this predicate with all its arguments unbound.

Dynamic rules are useful to turn all files in a certain directory into resources, without specifying a resource for each file. For example, assume the `file_search_path/2 icons` refers to the resource directory containing icon-files. The following definition makes all these images available as resources:

```prolog
resource(Name, image, icons(XpmName)) :-
    atom(Name), !,
    file_name_extension(Name, xpm, XpmName).

resource(Name, image, XpmFile) :-
    var(Name),
    absolute_file_name(icons(., [type(directory)], Dir),
                       concat(Dir, '/*.xpm', Pattern),
                       XpmFiles),
    member(XpmFile, XpmFiles).
```
10.4. FINDING APPLICATION FILES

open_resource(+Name, ?Class, -Stream)

Opens the resource specified by Name and Class. If the latter is a variable, it will be unified to the class of the first resource found that has the specified Name. If successful, Stream becomes a handle to a binary input stream, providing access to the content of the resource.

The predicate open_resource/3 first checks resource/3. When successful it will open the returned resource source file. Otherwise it will look in the program’s resource database. When creating a saved state, the system normally saves the resource contents into the resource archive, but does not save the resource clauses.

This way, the development environment uses the files (and modifications) to the resource/3 declarations and/or files containing resource info, thus immediately affecting the running environment, while the runtime system quickly accesses the system resources.

10.3.2 The swipl-rc program

The utility program swipl-rc can be used to examine and manipulate the contents of a SWI-Prolog resource file. The options are inspired by the Unix ar program. The basic command is:

```
% swipl-rc option resource-file member ...
```

The options are described below.

l

List contents of the archive.

x

Extract named (or all) members of the archive into the current directory.

a

Add files to the archive. If the archive already contains a member with the same name, the contents are replaced. Anywhere in the sequence of members, the options --class=class and --encoding=encoding may appear. They affect the class and encoding of subsequent files. The initial class is data and encoding none.

d

Delete named members from the archive.

This command is also described in the pl(1) Unix manual page.

10.4 Finding Application files

If your application uses files that are not part of the saved program such as database files, configuration files, etc., the runtime version has to be able to locate these files. The file_search_path/2 mechanism in combination with the -palias command-line argument is the preferred way to locate runtime files. The first step is to define an alias for the top-level directory of your application. We will call this directory gnatdir in our examples.

A good place for storing data associated with SWI-Prolog runtime systems is below the emulator’s home directory. swi is a predefined alias for this directory. The following is a useful default definition for the search path.
user:file_search_path(gnatdir, swi(gnat)).

The application should locate all files using absolute_file_name. Suppose gnatdir contains a file config.pl to define the local configuration. Then use the code below to load this file:

```prolog
configure_gnat :-
    ( absolute_file_name(gnatdir('config.pl'), ConfigFile)
      -> consult(ConfigFile)
    ; format(user_error, 'gnat: Cannot locate config.pl\n'),
      halt(1)
    ).
```

### 10.4.1 Passing a path to the application

Suppose the system administrator has installed the SWI-Prolog runtime environment in /usr/local/lib/rt-pl-3.2.0. A user wants to install gnat, but gnat will look for its configuration in /usr/local/lib/rt-pl-3.2.0/gnat where the user cannot write.

The user decides to install the gnat runtime files in /users/bob/lib/gnat. For one-time usage, the user may decide to start gnat using the command:

```bash
% gnat -p gnatdir=/users/bob/lib/gnat
```
The SWI-Prolog library

This chapter documents the SWI-Prolog library. As SWI-Prolog provides auto-loading, there is little difference between library predicates and built-in predicates. Part of the library is therefore documented in the rest of the manual. Library predicates differ from built-in predicates in the following ways:

- User definition of a built-in leads to a permission error, while using the name of a library predicate is allowed.

- If autoloading is disabled explicitly or because trapping unknown predicates is disabled (see unknown/2 and current_prolog_flag/2), library predicates must be loaded explicitly.

- Using libraries reduces the footprint of applications that don’t need them.

The documentation of the library has just started. Material from the standard packages should be moved here, some material from other parts of the manual should be moved too and various libraries are not documented at all.

A.1 library(aggregate): Aggregation operators on backtrackable predicates

**Compatibility** Quintus, SICStus 4. The forall/2 is a SWI-Prolog built-in and term_variables/3 is a SWI-Prolog with a different definition.

**To be done**
- Analysing the aggregation template and compiling a predicate for the list aggregation can be done at compile time.
- aggregate_all/3 can be rewritten to run in constant space using non-backtrackable assignment on a term.

This library provides aggregating operators over the solutions of a predicate. The operations are a generalisation of the bagof/3, setof/3 and findall/3 built-in predicates. The defined aggregation operations are counting, computing the sum, minimum, maximum, a bag of solutions and a set of solutions. We first give a simple example, computing the country with the smallest area:

```prolog
smallest_country(Name, Area) :-
    aggregate(min(A, N), country(N, A), min/Area, Name).
```

There are four aggregation predicates (aggregate/3, aggregate/4, aggregate_all/3 and aggregate/4), distinguished on two properties.
aggregate vs. aggregate_all  The aggregate predicates use \texttt{setof/3 (aggregate/4)} or \texttt{bagof/3(aggregate/3)}, dealing with existential qualified variables (Var \textasciitilde Goal) and providing multiple solutions for the remaining free variables in Goal. The \texttt{aggregate_all/3} predicate uses \texttt{findall/3}, implicitly qualifying all free variables and providing exactly one solution, while \texttt{aggregate_all/4} uses \texttt{sort/2} over solutions that Discriminator (see below) generated using \texttt{findall/3}.

The Discriminator argument  The versions with 4 arguments provide a Discriminator argument that allows for keeping duplicate bindings of a variable in the result. For example, if we wish to compute the total population of all countries, we do not want to lose results because two countries have the same population. Therefore we use:

\begin{verbatim}
  aggregate(sum(P), Name, country(Name, P), Total)
\end{verbatim}

All aggregation predicates support the following operators below in Template. In addition, they allow for an arbitrary named compound term, where each of the arguments is a term from the list below. For example, the term \texttt{r(min(X), max(X))} computes both the minimum and maximum binding for \texttt{X}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{count}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{Count} number of solutions. Same as \texttt{sum(1)}.
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{sum(Expr)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{Sum of Expr for all solutions.}
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{min(Expr)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{Minimum of Expr for all solutions.}
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{min(Expr, Witness)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item A term \texttt{min(Min, Witness)}, where \texttt{Min} is the minimal version of \texttt{Expr} over all solutions, and \texttt{Witness} is any other template applied to solutions that produced \texttt{Min}. If multiple solutions provide the same minimum, \texttt{Witness} corresponds to the first solution.
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{max(Expr)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{Maximum of Expr for all solutions.}
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{max(Expr, Witness)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item As \texttt{min(Expr, Witness)}, but producing the maximum result.
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{set(X)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{An ordered set with all solutions for X.}
    \end{itemize}
  \item \textbf{bag(X)}
    \begin{itemize}
      \item \texttt{A list of all solutions for X.}
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textbf{Acknowledgements}
\begin{quote}
The development of this library was sponsored by SecuritEase, http://www.securitease.com
\end{quote}
A.1. LIBRARY(AGGREGATE): AGGREGATION OPERATORS ON BACKTRACKABLE PREDICATES

aggregate(+Template, :Goal, -Result)  [nondet]
Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template. The aggregate/3 version performs bagof/3 on Goal.

aggregate(+Template, +Discriminator, :Goal, -Result)  [nondet]
Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template. The aggregate/4 version performs setof/3 on Goal.

aggregate_all(+Template, :Goal, -Result)  [semidet]
Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template. The aggregate_all/3 version performs findall/3 on Goal.

aggregate_all(+Template, +Discriminator, :Goal, -Result)  [semidet]
Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template. The aggregate_all/4 version performs findall/3 followed by sort/2 on Goal.

foreach(:Generator, :Goal)
True if conjunction of results is true. Unlike forall/2, which runs a failure-driven loop that proves Goal for each solution of Generator, foreach/2 creates a conjunction. Each member of the conjunction is a copy of Goal, where the variables it shares with Generator are filled with the values from the corresponding solution.

The implementation executes foreach/2 if Goal does not contain any variables that are not shared with Generator.

Here is an example:

?- foreach(between(1,4,X), dif(X,Y)), Y = 5.
   Y = 5
?- foreach(between(1,4,X), dif(X,Y)), Y = 3.
   No

bug  Goal is copied repeatedly, which may cause problems if attributed variables are involved.

free_variables(:Generator, +Template, +VarList0, -VarList)  [det]
Find free variables in bagof/setof template. In order to handle variables properly, we have to find all the universally quantified variables in the Generator. All variables as yet unbound are universally quantified, unless

1. they occur in the template
2. they are bound by X^P, setof/3, or bagof/3

free_variables(Generator, Template, OldList, NewList) finds this set using OldList as an accumulator.

author
- Richard O’Keefe
- Jan Wielemaker (made some SWI-Prolog enhancements)
license  Public domain (from DEC10 library).
To be done
- Distinguish between control-structures and data terms.
- Exploit our built-in term_variables/2 at some places?

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A.2 library(apply): Apply predicates on a list

See also
- apply_macros.pl provides compile-time expansion for part of this library.

To be done  Add include/4, include/5, exclude/4, exclude/5

This module defines meta-predicates that apply a predicate on all members of a list.

include(:Goal, +List1, ?List2)  \[det\]
Filter elements for which Goal succeeds. True if List2 contains those elements Xi of List1 for which call(Goal, Xi) succeeds.

See also  Older versions of SWI-Prolog had sublist/3 with the same arguments and semantics.

exclude(:Goal, +List1, ?List2)  \[det\]
Filter elements for which Goal fails. True if List2 contains those elements Xi of List1 for which call(Goal, Xi) fails.

partition(:Pred, +List, ?Included, ?Excluded)  \[det\]
Filter elements of List according to Pred. True if Included contains all elements for which call(Pred, X) succeeds and Excluded contains the remaining elements.

partition(:Pred, +List, ?Less, ?Equal, ?Greater)  \[semidet\]
Filter List according to Pred in three sets. For each element Xi of List, its destination is determined by call(Pred, Xi, Place), where Place must be unified to one of <, = or >. Pred must be deterministic.

maplist(:Goal, ?List)  
True if Goal can successfully be applied on all elements of List. Arguments are reordered to gain performance as well as to make the predicate deterministic under normal circumstances.

maplist(:Goal, ?List1, ?List2)  
As maplist/2, operating on pairs of elements from two lists.

maplist(:Goal, ?List1, ?List2, ?List3)  
As maplist/2, operating on triples of elements from three lists.

As maplist/2, operating on quadruples of elements from four lists.

foldl(:Goal, +List, +V0, -V)  
foldl(:Goal, +List1, +List2, +V0, -V)  
foldl(:Goal, +List1, +List2, +List3, +V0, -V)  
foldl(:Goal, +List1, +List2, +List3, +List4, +V0, -V)
Fold a list, using arguments of the list as left argument. The foldl family of predicates is defined by:
A.3. LIBRARY(ASSOC): ASSOCIATION LISTS

\( \text{foldl}(P, \ [X_{11}, \ldots, X_{1n}], \ldots, \ [X_{m1}, \ldots, X_{mn}], \ V_0, \ V_n) :- \)
\(P(X_{11}, \ldots, X_{m1}, \ V_0, \ V_1), \)
\(\ldots\)
\(P(X_{1n}, \ldots, X_{mn}, \ V', \ V_n).\)

\( \text{scanl}(\text{Goal}, +\text{List}, +V_0, -\text{Values}) \)
\( \text{scanl}(\text{Goal}, +\text{List}_1, +\text{List}_2, +V_0, -\text{Values}) \)
\( \text{scanl}(\text{Goal}, +\text{List}_1, +\text{List}_2, +\text{List}_3, +V_0, -\text{Values}) \)
\( \text{scanl}(\text{Goal}, +\text{List}_1, +\text{List}_2, +\text{List}_3, +\text{List}_4, +V_0, -\text{Values}) \)

Left scan of list. The scanl family of higher order list operations is defined by:

\( \text{scanl}(P, \ [X_{11}, \ldots, X_{1n}], \ldots, \ [X_{m1}, \ldots, X_{mn}], \ V_0, \ [V_0, V_1, \ldots, V_n]) :- \)
\(P(X_{11}, \ldots, X_{m1}, \ V_0, \ V_1), \)
\(\ldots\)
\(P(X_{1n}, \ldots, X_{mn}, \ V', \ V_n).\)

A.3 library(assoc): Association lists

Authors: Richard A. O’Keefe, L.Damas, V.S.Costa and Markus Triska

Elements of an association list have 2 components: A (unique) key and a value. Keys should be ground, values need not be. An association list can be used to fetch elements via their keys and to enumerate its elements in ascending order of their keys. The assoc module uses AVL trees to implement association lists. This makes inserting, changing and fetching a single element an \(O(\log(N))\) (where \(N\) denotes the number of elements in the list) expected time (and worst-case time) operation.

assoc_to_list(+Assoc, -List)

List is a list of Key-Value pairs corresponding to the associations in Assoc in ascending order of keys.

assoc_to_keys(+Assoc, -List)

List is a list of Keys corresponding to the associations in Assoc in ascending order.

assoc_to_values(+Assoc, -List)

List is a list of Values corresponding to the associations in Assoc in ascending order of the keys they are associated to.

empty_assoc(-Assoc)

Assoc is unified with an empty association list.

gen_assoc(?Key, +Assoc, ?Value)

Enumerate matching elements of Assoc in ascending order of their keys via backtracking.

get_assoc(+Key, +Assoc, ?Value)

Value is the value associated with Key in the association list Assoc.
get_assoc(+Key, +Assoc, ?Old, ?NewAssoc, ?New)

NewAssoc is an association list identical to Assoc except that the value associated with Key is New instead of Old.

list_to_assoc(+List, ?Assoc)

Assoc is an association list corresponding to the Key-Value pairs in List.

map_assoc(:Goal, +Assoc)

Goal(V) is true for every value V in Assoc.

map_assoc(:Goal, +AssocIn, ?AssocOut)

AssocOut is AssocIn with Goal applied to all corresponding pairs of values.

max_assoc(+Assoc, ?Key, ?Value)

Key and Value are key and value of the element with the largest key in Assoc.

min_assoc(+Assoc, ?Key, ?Value)

Key and Value are key and value of the element with the smallest key in Assoc.

ord_list_to_assoc(+List, ?Assoc)

Assoc is an association list correspond to the Key-Value pairs in List, which must occur in ascending order of their keys.

put_assoc(+Key, +Assoc, +Value, ?NewAssoc)

NewAssoc is an association list identical to Assoc except that Key is associated with Value. This can be used to insert and change associations.

is_assoc(+Assoc)

True if Assoc is a valid associations list. This predicate verifies the validity of each node in the AVL tree.

A.4 library(broadcast): Broadcast and receive event notifications

The broadcast library was invented to realise GUI applications consisting of stand-alone components that use the Prolog database for storing the application data. Figure A.1 illustrates the flow of information using this design.

The broadcasting service provides two services. Using the ‘shout’ service, an unknown number of agents may listen to the message and act. The broadcaster is not (directly) aware of the implications. Using the ‘request’ service, listening agents are asked for an answer one-by-one and the broadcaster is allowed to reject answers using normal Prolog failure.

Shouting is often used to inform about changes made to a common database. Other messages can be “save yourself” or “show this”.

Requesting is used to get information while the broadcaster is not aware who might be able to answer the question. For example “who is showing X?”.

broadcast(+Term)

Broadcast Term. There are no limitations to Term, though being a global service, it is good practice to use a descriptive and unique principal functor. All associated goals are started and regardless of their success or failure, broadcast/1 always succeeds. Exceptions are passed.
broadcast_request(+Term)

Unlike broadcast/1, this predicate stops if an associated goal succeeds. Backtracking causes it to try other listeners. A broadcast request is used to fetch information without knowing the identity of the agent providing it. C.f. “Is there someone who knows the age of John?” could be asked using

```prolog
...,
broadcast_request(age_of('John', Age)),
```

If there is an agent (listen) that registered an ‘age-of’ service and knows about the age of ‘John’ this question will be answered.

listen(+Template, :Goal)

Register a listen channel. Whenever a term unifying Template is broadcasted, call Goal. The following example traps all broadcasted messages as a variable unifies to any message. It is commonly used to debug usage of the library.

```prolog
?- listen(Term, (writeln(Term),fail)).
?- broadcast(hello(world)).
hello(world)
true.
```

listen(+Listener, +Template, :Goal)

Declare Listener as the owner of the channel. Unlike a channel opened using listen/2, channels that have an owner can terminate the channel. This is commonly used if an object is listening to broadcast messages. In the example below we define a ‘name-item’ displaying the name of an identifier represented by the predicate name_of/2.
:- pce_begin_class(name_item, text_item).

variable(id, any, get, "Id visualised").

initialise(NI, Id:any) :-
    name_of(Id, Name),
    send_super(NI, initialise, name, Name,
               message(NI, set_name, @arg1)),
    send(NI, slot, id, Id),
    listen(NI, name_of(Id, Name),
           send(NI, selection, Name)).

unlink(NI) :-
    unlisten(NI),
    send_super(NI, unlink).

set_name(NI, Name:name) :-
    get(NI, id, Id),
    retractall(name_of(Id, _)),
    assert(name_of(Id, Name)),
    broadcast(name_of(Id, Name)).

:- pce_end_class.

unlisten(+Listener)
   Deregister all entries created with listen/3 whose Listener unify.

unlisten(+Listener, +Template)
   Deregister all entries created with listen/3 whose Listener and Template unify.

unlisten(+Listener, +Template, :Goal)
   Deregister all entries created with listen/3 whose Listener, Template and Goal unify.

listening(?Listener, ?Template, ?Goal)
   Examine the current listeners. This predicate is useful for debugging purposes.

A.5 library(charsio): I/O on Lists of Character Codes

Compatibility The naming of this library is not in line with the ISO standard. We believe that the SWI-Prolog native predicates form a more elegant alternative for this library.

This module emulates the Quintus/SICStus library charsio.pl for reading and writing from/to lists of character codes. Most of these predicates are straight calls into similar SWI-Prolog primitives. Some can even be replaced by ISO standard predicates.
A.5. LIBRARY(CHARSIO): I/O ON LISTS OF CHARACTER CODES

format_to_chars(+Format, +Args, -Codes)
Use format/2 to write to a list of character codes.

format_to_chars(+Format, +Args, -Codes, ?Tail)
Use format/2 to write to a difference list of character codes.

write_to_chars(+Term, -Codes)
Write a term to a code list. True when Codes is a list of character codes written by write/1 on Term.

write_to_chars(+Term, -Codes, ?Tail)
Write a term to a code list. Codes\Tail is a difference list of character codes produced by write/1 on Term.

atom_to_chars(+Atom, -Codes)
Convert Atom into a list of character codes.

deprecated Use ISO atom_codes/2.

atom_to_chars(+Atom, -Codes, ?Tail)
Convert Atom into a difference list of character codes.

number_to_chars(+Number, -Codes)
Convert Atom into a list of character codes.

deprecated Use ISO number_codes/2.

number_to_chars(+Number, -Codes, ?Tail)
Convert Number into a difference list of character codes.

read_from_chars(+Codes, -Term)
Read Codes into Term.

Compatibility The SWI-Prolog version does not require Codes to end in a full-stop.

read_term_from_chars(+Codes, -Term, +Options)
Read Codes into Term. Options are processed by read_term/3.

Compatibility sicstus

open_chars_stream(+Codes, -Stream)
Open Codes as an input stream.

bug Depends on autoloading library(memfile). As many applications do not need this predicate we do not want to make the entire library dependent on autoloading.

with_output_to_chars(:Goal, -Codes)
Run Goal as with once/1. Output written to current_output is collected in Codes.

with_output_to_chars(:Goal, -Codes, ?Tail)
Run Goal as with once/1. Output written to current_output is collected in Codes\Tail.

with_output_to_chars(:Goal, -Stream, -Codes, ?Tail)
Same as with_output_to_chars/3 using an explicit stream. The difference list Codes\Tail contains the character codes that Goal has written to Stream.
A.6 library(check): Elementary completeness checks

This library defines the predicate check/0 and a few friends that allow for a quick-and-dirty cross-referencing.

check
Performs the three checking passes implemented by list_undefined/0, list/autoload/0 and list_redefined/0. Please check the definition of these predicates for details.

The typical usage of this predicate is right after loading your program to get a quick overview on the completeness and possible conflicts in your program.

list_undefined
Scans the database for predicates that have no definition. A predicate is considered defined if it has clauses or is declared using dynamic/1 or multifile/1. As a program is compiled, calls are translated to predicates. If the called predicate is not yet defined it is created as a predicate without definition. The same happens with runtime generated calls. This predicate lists all such undefined predicates that are referenced and not defined in the library. See also list/autoload/0. Below is an example from a real program and an illustration of how to edit the referencing predicate using edit/1.

```prolog
?- list_undefined.
Warning: The predicates below are not defined. If these are defined at runtime using assert/1, use :- dynamic Name/Arity.
Warning:.rdf_edit:rdfe_retract/4, which is referenced by 1-st clause of rdf_edit:undo/4
Warning: rdf_edit:rdfe_retract/3, which is referenced by 1-st clause of rdf_edit:delete_object/1
Warning: 1-st clause of rdf_edit:delete_subject/1
Warning: 1-st clause of rdf_edit:delete_predicate/1

?- edit(rdf_edit:undo/4).
```

listautoload
Lists all undefined (see list_undefined/0) predicates that have a definition in the library along with the file from which they will be autoloaded when accessed. See also autoload/0.

list_redefined
Lists predicates that are defined in the global module user as well as in a normal module; that is, predicates for which the local definition overrules the global default definition.

A.7 library(clpfd): Constraint Logic Programming over Finite Domains

author Markus Triska
Constraint programming is a declarative formalism that lets you describe conditions a solution must satisfy. This library provides CLP(FD), Constraint Logic Programming over Finite Domains. It can be used to model and solve various combinatorial problems such as planning, scheduling and allocation tasks.

Most predicates of this library are finite domain constraints, which are relations over integers. They generalise arithmetic evaluation of integer expressions in that propagation can proceed in all directions. This library also provides enumeration predicates, which let you systematically search for solutions on variables whose domains have become finite. A finite domain expression is one of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an integer</td>
<td>Given value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a variable</td>
<td>Unknown value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Expr</td>
<td>Unary minus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr + Expr</td>
<td>Addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr * Expr</td>
<td>Multiplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr - Expr</td>
<td>Subtraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr \ Expr</td>
<td>Exponentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>min(Expr,Expr)</td>
<td>Minimum of two expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>max(Expr,Expr)</td>
<td>Maximum of two expressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr mod Expr</td>
<td>Modulo induced by floored division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr rem Expr</td>
<td>Modulo induced by truncated division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abs(Expr)</td>
<td>Absolute value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr / Expr</td>
<td>Truncated integer division</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most important finite domain constraints are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 = Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 is larger than or equal to Expr2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 &lt; Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 is smaller than or equal to Expr2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 = Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 equals Expr2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 = Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 is not equal to Expr2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 &gt; Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 is strictly larger than Expr2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expr1 &lt; Expr2</td>
<td>Expr1 is strictly smaller than Expr2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The constraints in/2, \=/2, \\=/2, \<\=/2, \>/2, \=<\=/2, and \>/2 can be reified, which means reflecting their truth values into Boolean values represented by the integers 0 and 1. Let P and Q denote reifiable constraints or Boolean variables, then:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraint</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#\ Q</td>
<td>True iff Q is false</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P #\ Q</td>
<td>True iff either P or Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P #\ Q</td>
<td>True iff both P and Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P #\ Q</td>
<td>True iff P and Q are equivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P #\ Q</td>
<td>True iff P implies Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P #\ Q</td>
<td>True iff Q implies P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The constraints of this table are reifiable as well. If a variable occurs at the place of a constraint that is being reified, it is implicitly constrained to the Boolean values 0 and 1. Therefore, the following queries all fail: ?- #\ 2, ?- #\ #\ 2, etc.

Here is an example session with a few queries and their answers:
?- use_module(library(clpfd)).
% library(clpfd) compiled into clpfd 0.06 sec, 633,732 bytes
true.

?- X #> 3.
X in 4..sup.

?- X #\= 20.
X in inf..19\21..sup.

?- 2*X #= 10.
X = 5.

?- X*X #= 144.
X in -12\12.

?- 4*X + 2*Y #= 24, X + Y #= 9, [X,Y] ins 0..sup.
X = 3,
Y = 6.

?- Vs = [X,Y,Z], Vs ins 1..3, all_different(Vs), X = 1, Y #\= 2.
Vs = [1, 3, 2],
X = 1,
Y = 3,
Z = 2.

?- X #= Y #<== B, X in 0..3, Y in 4..5.
B = 0,
X in 0..3,
Y in 4..5.

In each case (and as for all pure programs), the answer is declaratively equivalent to the original query, and in many cases the constraint solver has deduced additional domain restrictions.

A common usage of this library is to first post the desired constraints among the variables of a model, and then to use enumeration predicates to search for solutions. As an example of a constraint satisfaction problem, consider the cryptoarithmetic puzzle SEND + MORE = MONEY, where different letters denote distinct integers between 0 and 9. It can be modeled in CLP(FD) as follows:

:- use_module(library(clpfd)).

puzzle([[S,E,N,D] + [M,O,R,E] = [M,O,N,E,Y]] :-
    Vars = [S,E,N,D,M,O,R,Y],
    Vars ins 0..9,
    all_different(Vars),
    S*1000 + E*100 + N*10 + D +
    M*1000 + O*100 + R*10 + E #=
Sample query and its result (actual variables replaced for readability):

?- puzzle(As+Bs=Cs).
As = [9, _A2, _A3, _A4],
Bs = [1, 0, _B3, _A2],
Cs = [1, 0, _A3, _A2, _C5],
_A2 in 4..7,
all_different([9, _A2, _A3, _A4, 1, 0, _B3, _C5]),
1000*9+91*_A2+ -90*_A3+_A4+ -9000*1+ -900*0+10*_B3+ -1*_C5#=0,
_A3 in 5..8,
_A4 in 2..8,
_B3 in 2..8,
_C5 in 2..8.

Here, the constraint solver has deduced more stringent bounds for all variables. Keeping the modeling part separate from the search lets you view these residual goals, observe termination and determinism properties of the modeling part in isolation from the search, and more easily experiment with different search strategies. Labeling can then be used to search for solutions:

?- puzzle(As+Bs=Cs), label(As).
As = [9, 5, 6, 7],
Bs = [1, 0, 8, 5],
Cs = [1, 0, 6, 5, 2] ;
false.

In this case, it suffices to label a subset of variables to find the puzzle's unique solution, since the constraint solver is strong enough to reduce the domains of remaining variables to singleton sets. In general though, it is necessary to label all variables to obtain ground solutions.

You can also use CLP(FD) constraints as a more declarative alternative for ordinary integer arithmetic with is/2, >/2 etc. For example:

:- use_module(library(clpfd)).
n_factorial(0, 1).
n_factorial(N, F) :-
  N #> 0, N1 #= N - 1, F #= N * F1,
n_factorial(N1, F1).

This predicate can be used in all directions. For example:

?- n_factorial(47, F).
F = 258623241511168180642964355153611979969197632389120000000000 ;
To make the predicate terminate if any argument is instantiated, add the (implied) constraint F \#\= 0 before the recursive call. Otherwise, the query n_factorial(N, 0) is the only non-terminating case of this kind.

This library uses goal_expansion/2 to rewrite constraints at compilation time. The expansion’s aim is to transparently bring the performance of CLP(FD) constraints close to that of conventional arithmetic predicates (</2, =:=/2, is/2 etc.) when the constraints are used in modes that can also be handled by built-in arithmetic. To disable the expansion, set the flag clpfd_goal_expansion to false.

Use call_residue_vars/2 and copy_term/3 to inspect residual goals and the constraints in which a variable is involved. This library also provides reflection predicates (like fd_dom/2, fd_size/2 etc.) with which you can inspect a variable’s current domain. These predicates can be useful if you want to implement your own labeling strategies.

You can also define custom constraints. The mechanism to do this is not yet finalised, and we welcome suggestions and descriptions of use cases that are important to you. As an example of how it can be done currently, let us define a new custom constraint ”oneground(X,Y,Z)”, where Z shall be 1 if at least one of X and Y is instantiated:

```prolog
:- use_module(library(clpfd)).
:- multifile clpfd:run_propagator/2.

oneground(X, Y, Z) :-
    clpfd:make_propagator(oneground(X, Y, Z), Prop),
    clpfd:init_propagator(X, Prop),
    clpfd:init_propagator(Y, Prop),
    clpfd:trigger_once(Prop).

clpfd:run_propagator(oneground(X, Y, Z), MState) :-
    ( integer(X) -> clpfd:kill(MState), Z = 1
    ; integer(Y) -> clpfd:kill(MState), Z = 1
    ; true
    ).
```

First, clpfd:make_propagator/2 is used to transform a user-defined representation of the new constraint to an internal form. With clpfd:init_propagator/2, this internal form is then attached to X and Y. From now on, the propagator will be invoked whenever the domains
of X or Y are changed. Then, clpfd:trigger_once/1 is used to give the propagator its first chance for propagation even though the variables’ domains have not yet changed. Finally, clpfd:run_propagator/2 is extended to define the actual propagator. As explained, this predicate is automatically called by the constraint solver. The first argument is the user-defined representation of the constraint as used in clpfd:make_propagator/2, and the second argument is a mutable state that can be used to prevent further invocations of the propagator when the constraint has become entailed, by using clpfd:kill/1. An example of using the new constraint:

?- oneground(X, Y, Z), Y = 5.
    Y = 5,
    Z = 1,
    X in inf..sup.

You can cite this library in your publications as:

@inproceedings{Triska12,
  author    = {Markus Triska},
  title     = {The Finite Domain Constraint Solver of {SWI-Prolog}},
  booktitle = {FLOPS},
  series    = {LNCS},
  volume    = {7294},
  year      = {2012},
  pages     = {307-316}
}

?Var in +Domain

Var is an element of Domain. Domain is one of:

Integer
  Singleton set consisting only of Integer.

Lower .. Upper
  All integers I such that Lower <= I <= Upper. Lower must be an integer or the atom inf, which denotes negative infinity. Upper must be an integer or the atom sup, which denotes positive infinity.

Domain1 \ Domain2
  The union of Domain1 and Domain2.

+Vars ins +Domain

The variables in the list Vars are elements of Domain.

indomain(?Var)

Bind Var to all feasible values of its domain on backtracking. The domain of Var must be finite.

label(+Vars)

Equivalent to labeling([], Vars).
labeling(+Options, +Vars)

Assign a value to each variable in Vars. Labeling means systematically trying out values for the finite domain variables Vars until all of them are ground. The domain of each variable in Vars must be finite. Options is a list of options that let you exhibit some control over the search process. Several categories of options exist:

The variable selection strategy lets you specify which variable of Vars is labeled next and is one of:

- **leftmost**
  Label the variables in the order they occur in Vars. This is the default.

- **ff**  
  *First fail.* Label the leftmost variable with smallest domain next, in order to detect infeasibility early. This is often a good strategy.

- **ffc**  
  Of the variables with smallest domains, the leftmost one participating in most constraints is labeled next.

- **min**  
  Label the leftmost variable whose lower bound is the lowest next.

- **max**  
  Label the leftmost variable whose upper bound is the highest next.

The value order is one of:

- **up**  
  Try the elements of the chosen variable’s domain in ascending order. This is the default.

- **down**  
  Try the domain elements in descending order.

The branching strategy is one of:

- **step**  
  For each variable X, a choice is made between X = V and X ≠ V, where V is determined by the value ordering options. This is the default.

- **enum**  
  For each variable X, a choice is made between X = V₁, X = V₂ etc., for all values Vᵢ of the domain of X. The order is determined by the value ordering options.

- **bisect**  
  For each variable X, a choice is made between X ≤ M and X > M, where M is the midpoint of the domain of X.

At most one option of each category can be specified, and an option must not occur repeatedly. The order of solutions can be influenced with:

- **min(Expr)**
max(Expr)

This generates solutions in ascending/descending order with respect to the evaluation of the arithmetic expression Expr. Labeling Vars must make Expr ground. If several such options are specified, they are interpreted from left to right, e.g.:

?- [X,Y] ins 10..20, labeling([max(X),min(Y)],[X,Y]).

This generates solutions in descending order of X, and for each binding of X, solutions are generated in ascending order of Y. To obtain the incomplete behaviour that other systems exhibit with "maximize(Expr)" and "minimize(Expr)", use once/1, e.g.:

once(labeling([max(Expr)],Vars))

Labeling is always complete, always terminates, and yields no redundant solutions.

all_different(+Vars)

Vars are pairwise distinct.

all_distinct(+Ls)

Like all_different/1, with stronger propagation. For example, all_distinct/1 can detect that not all variables can assume distinct values given the following domains:

?- maplist(in, V, [1..3..4, 1..2\4, 1..2\4, 1..3, 1..3, 1..6]), all_distinct(V).
false.

sum(+Vars, +Rel, ?Expr)

The sum of elements of the list Vars is in relation Rel to Expr. Rel is one of #=, #\=, #<, #>, #=< or #>=. For example:

?- [A,B,C] ins 0..sup, sum([A,B,C], #=, 100).
A in 0..100,
A+B+C#=100,
B in 0..100,
C in 0..100.

scalar_product(+Cs, +Vs, +Rel, ?Expr)

Cs is a list of integers, Vs is a list of variables and integers. True if the scalar product of Cs and Vs is in relation Rel to Expr, where Rel is #=, #\=, #<, #>, #=< or #>=.

?X #>= ?Y
X is greater than or equal to Y.
?X #=< ?Y  
  X is less than or equal to Y.

?X == ?Y  
  X equals Y.

?X #\= ?Y  
  X is not Y.

?X #> ?Y  
  X is greater than Y.

?X #< ?Y  
  X is less than Y. In addition to its regular use in problems that require it, this constraint can also be useful to eliminate uninteresting symmetries from a problem. For example, all possible matches between pairs built from four players in total:

?- Vs = [A,B,C,D], Vs ins 1..4,  
   all_different(Vs),  
   A #< B, C #< D, A #< C,  
   findall(pair(A,B)-pair(C,D), label(Vs), Ms).  
Ms = [ pair(1, 2)-pair(3, 4),  
       pair(1, 3)-pair(2, 4),  
       pair(1, 4)-pair(2, 3)].

\+Q
The reifiable constraint Q does not hold. For example, to obtain the complement of a domain:

?- #\ X in -3..0\10..80.  
X in inf.. -4\1..9\81..sup.

?P #<===> ?Q  
P and Q are equivalent. For example:

?- X #= 4 #<===> B, X #\= 4.  
B = 0,  
X in inf..3\5..sup.

The following example uses reified constraints to relate a list of finite domain variables to the number of occurrences of a given value:

:- use_module(library(clpfd)).

vs_n_num(Vs, N, Num) :-  
   maplist(eq_b(N), Vs, Bs),  
   sum(Bs, #=, Num).

eq_b(X, Y, B) :- X #= Y #<===> B.
Sample queries and their results:

?- Vs = [X,Y,Z], Vs ins 0..1, vs_n_num(Vs, 4, Num).
Vs = [X, Y, Z],
Num = 0,
X in 0..1,
Y in 0..1,
Z in 0..1.

?- vs_n_num([X,Y,Z], 2, 3).
X = 2,
Y = 2,
Z = 2.

?P #==> ?Q
P implies Q.

?P #<== ?Q
Q implies P.

?P #\/
?Q
P and Q hold.

?P #\/
?Q
P or Q holds. For example, the sum of natural numbers below 1000 that are multiples of 3 or 5:

?- findall(N, (N mod 3 #= 0 #\/ N mod 5 #= 0, N in 0..999, indomain(N)),
      Ns),
     sum(Ns, #=, Sum).
Ns = [0, 3, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 18|...],
Sum = 233168.

lex_chain(+Lists)
Lists are lexicographically non-decreasing.

tuples_in(+Tuples, +Relation)
Relation must be a list of lists of integers. The elements of the list Tuples are constrained to be elements of Relation. Arbitrary finite relations, such as compatibility tables, can be modeled in this way. For example, if 1 is compatible with 2 and 5, and 4 is compatible with 0 and 3:

?- tuples_in([[X,Y]], [[1,2],[1,5],[4,0],[4,3]]), X = 4.
X = 4,
Y in 0\//3.

As another example, consider a train schedule represented as a list of quadruples, denoting departure and arrival places and times for each train. In the following program, Ps is a feasible journey of length 3 from A to D via trains that are part of the given schedule.
:- use_module(library(clpfd)).

trains([[1,2,0,1],
        [2,3,4,5],
        [2,3,0,1],
        [3,4,5,6],
        [3,4,2,3],
        [3,4,8,9]]).

threepath(A, D, Ps) :-
    Ps = [[A,B,_,T0,T1], [B,C,T2,T3], [C,D,T4,_,T5]],
    T2 #> T1,
    T4 #> T3,
    trains(Ts),
    tuples_in(Ps, Ts).

In this example, the unique solution is found without labeling:

?- threepath(1, 4, Ps).
Ps = [[1, 2, 0, 1], [2, 3, 4, 5], [3, 4, 8, 9]].

serialized(+Starts, +Durations)
Constrain a set of intervals to a non-overlapping sequence. Starts = [S_1,...,S_n] is a list of variables or integers, Durations = [D_1,...,D_n] is a list of non-negative integers. Constrains Starts and Durations to denote a set of non-overlapping tasks, i.e.: S_i + D_i <= S_j or S_j + D_j <= S_i for all 1 <= i < j <= n. Example:

?- length(Vs, 3),
   Vs ins 0..3,
   serialized(Vs, [1,2,3]),
   label(Vs).
Vs = [0, 1, 3] ;
Vs = [2, 0, 3] ;    false.

See also Dorndorf et al. 2000, "Constraint Propagation Techniques for the Disjunctive Scheduling Problem"

element(?N, +Vs, ?V)
The N-th element of the list of finite domain variables Vs is V. Analogous to nth1/3.

global_cardinality(+Vs, +Pairs)
Global Cardinality constraint. Equivalent to global_cardinality(Vs, Pairs, []). Example:

?- Vs = [_,_,_], global_cardinality(Vs, [1-2,3-_]), label(Vs).
Vs = [1, 1, 3] ;
A.7. LIBRARY(CLPFD): CONSTRAINT LOGIC PROGRAMMING OVER FINITE DOMAINS

| Vs = [1, 3, 1] ; |
| Vs = [3, 1, 1] . |

global_cardinality(+Vs, +Pairs, +Options)
Global Cardinality constraint. Vs is a list of finite domain variables, Pairs is a list of Key-Num pairs, where Key is an integer and Num is a finite domain variable. The constraint holds iff each V in Vs is equal to some key, and for each Key-Num pair in Pairs, the number of occurrences of Key in Vs is Num. Options is a list of options. Supported options are:

consistency(value)
A weaker form of consistency is used.

cost(Cost, Matrix)
Matrix is a list of rows, one for each variable, in the order they occur in Vs. Each of these rows is a list of integers, one for each key, in the order these keys occur in Pairs. When variable v_i is assigned the value of key k_j, then the associated cost is Matrix_{ij}. Cost is the sum of all costs.

circuit(+Vs)
True if the list Vs of finite domain variables induces a Hamiltonian circuit. The k-th element of Vs denotes the successor of node k. Node indexing starts with 1. Examples:

?- length(Vs, _), circuit(Vs), label(Vs).
Vs = []; |
Vs = [1] ; |
Vs = [2, 1] ; |
Vs = [2, 3, 1] ; |
Vs = [3, 1, 2] ; |
Vs = [2, 3, 4, 1] . |

cumulative(+Tasks)
Equivalent to cumulative(Tasks, [limit(1)]).

cumulative(+Tasks, +Options)
Tasks is a list of tasks, each of the form task(S_i, D_i, E_i, C_i, T_i). S_i denotes the start time, D_i the positive duration, E_i the end time, C_i the non-negative resource consumption, and T_i the task identifier. Each of these arguments must be a finite domain variable with bounded domain, or an integer. The constraint holds if at any time during the start and end of each task, the total resource consumption of all tasks running at that time does not exceed the global resource limit (which is 1 by default). Options is a list of options. Currently, the only supported option is:

limit(L)
The integer L is the global resource limit.

automaton(+Signature, +Nodes, +Arcs)
Constrain variables with a finite automaton. Equivalent to automaton(_, _, Signature, Nodes, Arcs, [], [], _), a common use case of automaton/8. In the following example, a list of binary finite domain variables is constrained to contain at least two consecutive ones:
two_consecutive_ones(Vs) :-
    automaton(Vs, [source(a), sink(c)],
                [arc(a,0,a), arc(a,1,b),
                 arc(b,0,a), arc(b,1,c),
                 arc(c,0,c), arc(c,1,c)]).

?- length(Vs, 3), two_consecutive_ones(Vs), label(Vs).
Vs = [0, 1, 1] ;
Vs = [1, 1, 0] ;
Vs = [1, 1, 1].

automaton(?Sequence, ?Template, +Signature, +Nodes, +Arcs, +Counters, +Initials, ?Finals)

Constrain variables with a finite automaton. True if the finite automaton induced by Nodes and Arcs (extended with Counters) accepts Signature. Sequence is a list of terms, all of the same shape. Additional constraints must link Sequence to Signature, if necessary. Nodes is a list of source(Node) and sink(Node) terms. Arcs is a list of arc(Node,Integer,Node) and arc(Node,Integer,Node,Exprs) terms that denote the automaton’s transitions. Each node is represented by an arbitrary term. Transitions that are not mentioned go to an implicit failure node. Exprs is a list of arithmetic expressions, of the same length as Counters. In each expression, variables occurring in Counters correspond to old counter values, and variables occurring in Template correspond to the current element of Sequence. When a transition containing expressions is taken, counters are updated as stated. By default, counters remain unchanged. Counters is a list of variables that must not occur anywhere outside of the constraint goal. Initials is a list of the same length as Counters. Counter arithmetic on the transitions relates the counter values in Initials to Finals.

The following example is taken from Beldiceanu, Carlsson, Debruyne and Petit: ”Reformulation of Global Constraints Based on Constraints Checkers”, Constraints 10(4), pp 339-362 (2005). It relates a sequence of integers and finite domain variables to its number of inflexions, which are switches between strictly ascending and strictly descending subsequences:
variables_signature([V|Vs], Sigs) :-
    variables_signature_(Vs, V, Sigs).

variables_signature_([], _, []).
variables_signature_([V|Vs], Prev, [S|Sigs]) :-
    V #= Prev #<===> S #= 0,
    Prev #< V #<===> S #= 1,
    Prev #> V #<===> S #= 2,
    variables_signature_(Vs, V, Sigs).
problem(1, [[_,_,_,_,_,_,_,_],
[-,_,_,_,_,3,_,8,5],
[-,_,1,_,2,_,_,_,_],
[-,_,5,_,7,_,_,_,_],
[-,4,_,_,_,1,_,_,_],
[-,9,_,_,_,_,_,_,_],
[5,_,_,_,_,_,_,7,3],
[_,2,_,1,_,_,_,_,_],
[_,_,4,_,_,_,9,_,_]]).

Sample query:
?- problem(1, Rows), sudoku(Rows), maplist(writeln, Rows).
[9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1]
[2, 4, 6, 1, 7, 3, 9, 8, 5]
[3, 5, 1, 9, 2, 8, 7, 4, 6]
[1, 2, 8, 5, 3, 7, 6, 9, 4]
[6, 3, 4, 8, 9, 2, 1, 5, 7]
[7, 9, 5, 4, 6, 1, 8, 3, 2]
[5, 1, 9, 2, 8, 6, 4, 7, 3]
[4, 7, 2, 3, 1, 9, 5, 6, 8]
[8, 6, 3, 7, 4, 5, 2, 1, 9]
Rows = [[9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2|...], ...
... , [...]|...]].

zcompare(?Order, ?A, ?B)
Analogous to compare/3, with finite domain variables A and B. Example:

:- use_module(library(clpfd)).

n_factorial(N, F) :-
  zcompare(C, N, 0),
  n_factorial_(C, N, F).

n_factorial_(=, _, 1).

n_factorial_(>, N, F) :-
  F #= F0*N, N1 #= N - 1,
  n_factorial_(N1, F0).

This version is deterministic if the first argument is instantiated:

?- n_factorial(30, F).
F = 265252859812191058636308480000000.

chain(+Zs, +Relation)
Constrain variables to be a chain with respect to Relation. Zs is a list of finite domain variables.
that are a chain with respect to the partial order \( Relation \), in the order they appear in the list. \( Relation \) must be \#=, \#=\,#=, \#< or \#>. For example:

```prolog
?- chain([X,Y,Z], #>=).
X#>=Y,
Y#>=Z.
```

**fd_var(+Var)**

True iff \( Var \) is a CLP(FD) variable.

**fd_inf(+Var, -Inf)**

\( Inf \) is the infimum of the current domain of \( Var \).

**fd_sup(+Var, -Sup)**

\( Sup \) is the supremum of the current domain of \( Var \).

**fd_size(+Var, -Size)**

Determine the size of a variable’s domain. \( Size \) is the number of elements of the current domain of \( Var \), or the atom sup if the domain is unbounded.

**fd_dom(+Var, -Dom)**

\( Dom \) is the current domain (see in/2) of \( Var \). This predicate is useful if you want to reason about domains. It is not needed if you only want to display remaining domains; instead, separate your model from the search part and let the toplevel display this information via residual goals.

---

**A.8 library(clpqr): Constraint Logic Programming over Rationals and Reals**

Author: Christian Holzbaur, ported to SWI-Prolog by Leslie De Koninck, K.U. Leuven

This CLP(Q,R) system is a port of the CLP(Q,R) system of Sicstus Prolog by Christian Holzbaur: Holzbaur C.: OFAI clp(q,r) Manual, Edition 1.3.3, Austrian Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence, Vienna, TR-95-09, 1995.\(^1\) This manual is roughly based on the manual of the above mentioned CLP(Q,R) implementation.

The CLP(Q,R) system consists of two components: the CLP(Q) library for handling constraints over the rational numbers and the CLP(R) library for handling constraints over the real numbers (using floating point numbers as representation). Both libraries offer the same predicates (with exception of \( bb_{\text{inf}}/4 \) in CLP(Q) and \( bb_{\text{inf}}/5 \) in CLP(R)). It is allowed to use both libraries in one program, but using both CLP(Q) and CLP(R) constraints on the same variable will result in an exception.

Please note that the clpqr library is not an autoload library and therefore this library must be loaded explicitly before using it:

```prolog
:- use_module(library(clpq)).
```

or

\(^1\)http://www.ai.univie.ac.at/cgi-bin/tr-online?number=95-09
A.8.1 Solver predicates

The following predicates are provided to work with constraints:

\{\}(+Constraints)

Adds the constraints given by Constraints to the constraint store.

entailed(+Constraint)

Succeeds if Constraint is necessarily true within the current constraint store. This means that adding the negation of the constraint to the store results in failure.

inf(+Expression, -Inf)

Computes the infimum of Expression within the current state of the constraint store and returns that infimum in Inf. This predicate does not change the constraint store.

sup(+Expression, -Sup)

Computes the supremum of Expression within the current state of the constraint store and returns that supremum in Sup. This predicate does not change the constraint store.

minimize(+Expression)

Minimizes Expression within the current constraint store. This is the same as computing the infimum and equating the expression to that infimum.

maximize(+Expression)

Maximizes Expression within the current constraint store. This is the same as computing the supremum and equating the expression to that supremum.

bb_inf(+Ints, +Expression, -Inf, -Vertex, +Eps)

This predicate is offered in CLP(R) only. It computes the infimum of Expression within the current constraint store, with the additional constraint that in that infimum, all variables in Ints have integral values. Vertex will contain the values of Ints in the infimum. Eps denotes how much a value may differ from an integer to be considered an integer. E.g. when Eps = 0.001, then X = 4.999 will be considered as an integer (5 in this case). Eps should be between 0 and 0.5.

bb_inf(+Ints, +Expression, -Inf, -Vertex)

This predicate is offered in CLP(Q) only. It behaves the same as bb_inf/5 but does not use an error margin.

bb_inf(+Ints, +Expression, -Inf)

The same as bb_inf/5 or bb_inf/4 but without returning the values of the integers. In CLP(R), an error margin of 0.001 is used.

dump(+Target, +Newvars, -CodedAnswer)

Returns the constraints on Target in the list CodedAnswer where all variables of Target have been replaced by NewVars. This operation does not change the constraint store. E.g. in

:- use_module(library(clpr)).
\[
(\text{Constraints}) ::= (\text{Constraint}), (\text{Constraints}) \quad \text{single constraint}
\]
\[
\text{Constraint} ::= (\text{Expression}) < (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{less than}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) ::= (\text{Variable}) \quad \text{Prolog variable}
\]
\[
(\text{Number}) \quad \text{Prolog number}
\]
\[
+ (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{unary plus}
\]
\[
- (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{unary minus}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) + (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{addition}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) - (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{subtraction}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) \times (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{multiplication}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) / (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{division}
\]
\[
\text{abs}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{absolute value}
\]
\[
\text{sin}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{sine}
\]
\[
\text{cos}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{cosine}
\]
\[
\text{tan}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{tangent}
\]
\[
\text{exp}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{exponent}
\]
\[
\text{pow}(\text{Expression}) \quad \text{exponent}
\]
\[
(\text{Expression}) ^ (\text{Expression}) \quad \text{exponent}
\]
\[
\text{min}(\text{Expression}, \text{Expression}) \quad \text{minimum}
\]
\[
\text{max}(\text{Expression}, \text{Expression}) \quad \text{maximum}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table A.1: CLP(Q,R) constraint BNF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

```
dump([X,Y,Z],[x,y,z],Cons)
```

Cons will contain the constraints on X, Y and Z, where these variables have been replaced by atoms x, y and z.

### A.8.2 Syntax of the predicate arguments

The arguments of the predicates defined in the subsection above are defined in table A.1. Failing to meet the syntax rules will result in an exception.

### A.8.3 Use of unification

Instead of using the \{\}/1 predicate, you can also use the standard unification mechanism to store constraints. The following code samples are equivalent:
\[ A = B \times C \]  
\[ \text{B or C is ground} \]  
\[ \text{A and (B or C) are ground} \]  
\[ A = 5 \times C \text{ or } A = B \times 4 \]  
\[ 20 = 5 \times C \text{ or } 20 = B \times 4 \]  
\[ A = B / C \]  
\[ \text{C is ground} \]  
\[ \text{A and B are ground} \]  
\[ A = B / 3 \]  
\[ 4 = 12 / C \]  
\[ X = \min(Y, Z) \]  
\[ \text{Y and Z are ground} \]  
\[ X = \max(Y, Z) \]  
\[ \text{Y and Z are ground} \]  
\[ X = \abs(Y) \]  
\[ \text{Y is ground} \]  
\[ X = \min(4,3) \]  
\[ X = \max(4,3) \]  
\[ X = \abs(-7) \]  
\[ X = \pow(Y, Z) \]  
\[ \text{X and Y are ground} \]  
\[ 8 = 2 \times Z \]  
\[ X = \exp(Y, Z) \]  
\[ \text{X and Z are ground} \]  
\[ 8 = Y \times 3 \]  
\[ X = 2 \times 3 \]  
\[ X = \sin(Y) \]  
\[ \text{X is ground} \]  
\[ 1 = \sin(Y) \]  
\[ X = \cos(Y) \]  
\[ \text{Y is ground} \]  
\[ X = \sin(1.5707) \]  
\[ X = \tan(Y) \]  
| Table A.2: CLP(Q,R) isolating axioms |

- **Unification with a variable**
  \{X = Y\}
  \[ X = Y \]

- **Unification with a number**
  \{X = 5.0\}
  \[ X = 5.0 \]

### A.8.4 Non-linear constraints

The CLP(Q,R) system deals only passively with non-linear constraints. They remain in a passive state until certain conditions are satisfied. These conditions, which are called the isolation axioms, are given in table A.2.

### A.8.5 Status and known problems

The clpq and clpr libraries are ‘orphaned’, i.e., they currently have no maintainer.

- **Top-level output**
  The top-level output may contain variables not present in the original query:

  ?- \{X+Y>=1\}.
  \{Y=1-X+_G2160, _G2160>=0\}.
  ?-  

Nonetheless, for linear constraints this kind of answer means unconditional satisfiability.
• Dumping constraints
  The first argument of dump/3 has to be a list of free variables at call-time:

  \[
  \text{?- \{X=1\}, dump([X],[Y],L).}
  \]
  ERROR: Unhandled exception: Unknown message:
  \[\text{instantiation_error(dump([1],[_G11],_G6),1)}\]
  ?-

A.9  library(csv): Process CSV (Comma-Separated Values) data

See also  RFC 4180

To be done
  - Implement immediate assert of the data to avoid possible stack overflows.
  - Writing creates an intermediate code-list, possibly overflowing resources. This waits for pure output!

This library parses and generates CSV data. CSV data is represented in Prolog as a list of rows. Each row is a compound term, where all rows have the same name and arity.

csv_read_file(+File, -Rows)  \[det\]
csv_read_file(+File, -Rows, +Options)  \[det\]
  Read a CSV file into a list of rows. Each row is a Prolog term with the same arity. Options
  is handed to csv//2. Remaining options are processed by phrase_from_file/3. The
default separator depends on the file name extension and is \t for .tsv files and , otherwise.

Suppose we want to create a predicate table/6 from a CSV file that we know contains 6
fields per record. This can be done using the code below. Without the option arity(6), this
would generate a predicate table/N, where N is the number of fields per record in the data.

  \[
  \text{?- csv_read_file(File, Rows, [functor(table), arity(6)]},
  \text{maplist(assert, Rows)}.
  \]

csv(?Rows)  //  \[det\]
csv(?Rows, +Options)  //  \[det\]
  Prolog DCG to ‘read/write’ CSV data. Options:

  separator(+Code)
  The comma-separator. Must be a character code. Default is (of course) the comma.
  Character codes can be specified using the 0’ notion. E.g., separator(0’;).

  ignore_quotes(+Boolean)
  If true (default false), threat double quotes as a normal character.

  strip(+Boolean)
  If true (default false), strip leading and trailing blank space. RFC4180 says that
  blank space is part of the data.
APPENDIX A. THE SWI-PROLOG LIBRARY

convert(+Boolean)
If true (default), use name/2 on the field data. This translates the field into a number if possible.

functor(+Atom)
Functor to use for creating row terms. Default is row.

arity(?Arity)
Number of fields in each row. This predicate raises a domain_error(row arity(Expected), Found) if a row is found with different arity.

match_arity(+Boolean)
If false (default true), do not reject CSV files where lines provide a varying number of fields (columns). This can be a work-around to use some incorrect CSV files.

csv_read_file_row(+File, -Row, +Options)
True when Row is a row in File. First unifies Row with the first row in File. Backtracking yields the second, ..., row. This interface is an alternative to csv_read_file/3 that avoids loading all rows in memory. Note that this interface does not guarantee that all rows in File have the same arity.

In addition to the options of csv_read_file/3, this predicate processes the option:

line(-Line)
Line is unified with the 1-based line-number from which Row is read.

csv_write_file(+File, +Data)
Write a list of Prolog terms to a CSV file. Options are given to csv//2. Remaining options are given to open/4. The default separator depends on the file name extension and is \t for .tsv files and , otherwise.

csv_write_stream(+Stream, +Data, +Options)
Write the rows in Data to Stream. This is similar to csv_write_file/3, but can deal with data that is produced incrementally. The example below saves all answers from the predicate data/3 to File.

```
save_data(File) :-
    setup_call_cleanup(
        open(File, write, Out),
        forall(data(C1,C2,C3),
            csv_write_file(Out, [row(C1,C2,C3)], [])),
        close(Out)),
```

A.10 library(debug): Print debug messages and test assertions

author Jan Wielemaker

This library is a replacement for format/3 for printing debug messages. Messages are assigned a topic. By dynamically enabling or disabling topics the user can select desired messages. Debug statements are removed when the code is compiled for optimization.
See manual for details. With XPCE, you can use the call below to start a graphical monitoring tool.

?- prolog_ide(debug_monitor).

Using the predicate \texttt{assertion/1} you can make assumptions about your program explicit, trapping the debugger if the condition does not hold.

\begin{verbatim}
debugging(+Topic) \hspace{1cm} [semidet]
debugging(-Topic) \hspace{1cm} [nondet]
debugging(?Topic, ?Bool) \hspace{1cm} [nondet]
\end{verbatim}

Examine debug topics. The form \texttt{debugging(+Topic)} may be used to perform more complex debugging tasks. A typical usage skeleton is:

\begin{verbatim}
( debugging(mytopic)
  ->  <perform debugging actions>
  ;  true
),
\end{verbatim}

The other two calls are intended to examine existing and enabled debugging tokens and are typically not used in user programs.

\begin{verbatim}
debug(+Topic) \hspace{1cm} [det]
nodebug(+Topic) \hspace{1cm} [det]
\end{verbatim}

Add/remove a topic from being printed. \texttt{nodebug(_)} removes all topics. Gives a warning if the topic is not defined unless it is used from a directive. The latter allows placing debug topics at the start of a (load-)file without warnings.

For \texttt{debug/1}, \texttt{Topic} can be a term \texttt{Topic > Out}, where \texttt{Out} is either a stream or stream-alias or a filename (atom). This redirects debug information on this topic to the given output.

\begin{verbatim}
list_debug_topics \hspace{1cm} [det]
\end{verbatim}

List currently known debug topics and their setting.

\begin{verbatim}
debug_message_context(+What) \hspace{1cm} [det]
\end{verbatim}

Specify additional context for debug messages. \texttt{What} is one of +Context or -Context, and Context is one of \texttt{thread, time or time(Format)}, where \texttt{Format} is a format specification for \texttt{format(time/3} (default is \texttt{%T.%3f}). Initially, \texttt{debug/3} shows only thread information.

\begin{verbatim}
debug(+Topic, +Format, :Args) \hspace{1cm} [det]
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{Format} a message if debug topic is enabled. Similar to \texttt{format/3} to \texttt{user_error}, but only prints if \texttt{Topic} is activated through \texttt{debug/1}. \texttt{Args} is a meta-argument to deal with goal for the @-command. Output is first handed to the hook \texttt{prolog:debug.print_hook/3}. If this fails, \texttt{Format+Args} is translated to text using the message-translation (see \texttt{print_message/2}) for the term \texttt{debug(Format, Args)} and then printed to every matching destination (controlled by \texttt{debug/1}) using \texttt{print_message_lines/3}.

The message is preceded by ’% ’ and terminated with a newline.
See also \texttt{format/3}.

\texttt{prolog:debug_print_hook(+Topic, +Format, +Args)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[semidet,multifile]}

Hook called by \texttt{debug/3}. This hook is used by the graphical frontend that can be activated using \texttt{prolog_ide/1}:

\begin{verbatim}
?- prolog_ide(debug_monitor).
\end{verbatim}

\texttt{assertion(+Goal)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[det]}

Acts similar to C assert() macro. It has no effect if \texttt{Goal} succeeds. If \texttt{Goal} fails or throws an exception, the following steps are taken:

\begin{itemize}
  \item call \texttt{prolog:assertion_failed/2}. If \texttt{prolog:assertion_failed/2} fails, then:
    \begin{itemize}
      \item If this is an interactive toplevel thread, print a message, the stack-trace, and finally trap the debugger.
      \item Otherwise, throw error(assertion_error(Reason, G),_\ldots) where Reason is one of fail or the exception raised.
    \end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\texttt{prolog:assertion_failed(+Reason, +Goal)} \hspace{1cm} \texttt{[semidet,multifile]}

This hook is called if the \texttt{Goal} of \texttt{assertion/1} fails. \texttt{Reason} is unified with either fail if \texttt{Goal} simply failed or an exception call otherwise. If this hook fails, the default behaviour is activated. If the hooks throws an exception it will be propagated into the caller of \texttt{assertion/1}.

### A.11 library(gensym): Generate unique identifiers

Gensym (\textit{Generate Symbols}) is an old library for generating unique symbols (atoms). Such symbols are generated from a base atom which gets a sequence number appended. Of course there is no guarantee that ‘catch22’ is not an already defined atom and therefore one must be aware these atoms are only unique in an isolated context.

The SWI-Prolog gensym library is thread-safe. The sequence numbers are global over all threads and therefore generated atoms are unique over all threads.

\texttt{gensym(+Base, -Unique)}

Generate a unique atom from base \texttt{Base} and unify it with \texttt{Unique}. \texttt{Base} should be an atom. The first call will return \langle base\rangle 1, the next \langle base\rangle 2, etc. Note that this is no guarantee that the atom is unique in the system.

\texttt{reset_gensym(+Base)}

Restart generation of identifiers from \texttt{Base} at \langle Base\rangle 1. Used to make sure a program produces the same results on subsequent runs. Use with care.

\texttt{reset_gensym}

Reset gensym for all registered keys. This predicate is available for compatibility only. New code is strongly advised to avoid the use of \texttt{reset_gensym} or at least to reset only the keys used by your program to avoid unexpected side effects on other components.
A.12  library(lists): List Manipulation

Compatibility  Virtually every Prolog system has library(lists), but the set of provided predicates is diverse. There is a fair agreement on the semantics of most of these predicates, although error handling may vary.

This library provides commonly accepted basic predicates for list manipulation in the Prolog community. Some additional list manipulations are built-in. See e.g., memberchk/2, length/2.

The implementation of this library is copied from many places. These include: “The Craft of Prolog”, the DEC-10 Prolog library (LISTRO.PL) and the YAP lists library. Some predicates are reimplemented based on their specification by Quintus and SICStus.

member(?Elem, ?List)

True if Elem is a member of List. The SWI-Prolog definition differs from the classical one. Our definition avoids unpacking each list element twice and provides determinism on the last element. E.g. this is deterministic:

```
member(X, [One]).
```

author  Gertjan van Noord

append(?List1, ?List2, ?List1AndList2)

List1AndList2 is the concatenation of List1 and List2

append(+ListOfLists, ?List)

Concatenate a list of lists. Is true if ListOfLists is a list of lists, and List is the concatenation of these lists.

Parameters

ListOfLists must be a list of possibly partial lists

prefix(?Part, ?Whole)

True iff Part is a leading substring of Whole. This is the same as append(Part, _, Whole).

select(?Elem, ?List1, ?List2)

Is true when List1, with Elem removed, results in List2.

selectchk(+Elem, +List, -Rest)

Semi-deterministic removal of first element in List that unifies with Elem.


Select two elements from two lists at the same place. True when select(X, XList) and select(Y, YList) are true, X and Y appear in the same locations of their respective lists and same_length(XList, YList) is true. A typical use for this predicate is to replace an element:

```
?- select(b, [a,b,c], 2, X).
X = [a, 2, c] ;
X = [a, b, c].
```
selectchk(?X, ?XList, ?Y, ?YList) [semidet]
Semi-deterministic version of select/4.

nextto(?X, ?Y, ?List)
True if Y follows X in List.

delete(+List1, @Elem, -List2) [det]
Delete matching elements from a list. True when List2 is a list with all elements from List1 except for those that unify with Elem. Matching Elem with elements of List1 is uses \+ Elem \= H, which implies that Elem is not changed.

See also select/3, subtract/3.
deprecated There are too many ways in which one might want to delete elements from a list to justify the name. Think of matching (= vs. ==), delete first/all, be deterministic or not.

nth0(?Index, ?List, ?Elem)
True when Elem is the Index’th element of List. Counting starts at 0.

Errors type_error(integer, Index) if Index is not an integer or unbound.
See also nth1/3.

nth1(?Index, ?List, ?Elem)
Is true when Elem is the Index’th element of List. Counting starts at 1.

See also nth0/3.

nth0(?N, ?List, ?Elem, ?Rest) [det]
Select/insert element at index. True when Elem is the N’th (0-based) element of List and Rest is the remainder (as in by select/3) of List. For example:

```prolog
?- nth0(I, [a,b,c], E, R).
I = 0, E = a, R = [b, c] ;
I = 1, E = b, R = [a, c] ;
I = 2, E = c, R = [a, b] ;
false.

?- nth0(1, L, a1, [a,b]).
L = [a, a1, b].
```

nth1(?N, ?List, ?Elem, ?Rest) [det]
As nth0/4, but counting starts at 1.

last(?List, ?Last)
Succeeds when Last is the last element of List. This predicate is semidet if List is a list and multi if List is a partial list.

Compatibility There is no de-facto standard for the argument order of last/2. Be careful when porting code or use append(_, [Last], List) as a portable alternative.
A.12. LIBRARY(LISTS): LIST MANIPULATION

proper_length(@List, -Length)  [semidet]
    True when Length is the number of elements in the proper list List. This is equivalent to

    proper_length(List, Length) :-
        is_list(List),
        length(List, Length).

same_length(?List1, ?List2)
    Is true when List1 and List2 are lists with the same number of elements. The predicate is
deterministic if at least one of the arguments is a proper list. It is non-deterministic if both
arguments are partial lists.
See also length/2

reverse(?List1, ?List2)
    Is true when the elements of List2 are in reverse order compared to List1.

permutation(?Xs, ?Ys)  [nondet]
    True when Xs is a permutation of Ys. This can solve for Ys given Xs or Xs given Ys, or even
enumerate Xs and Ys together. The predicate permutation/2 is primarily intended to
generate permutations. Note that a list of length N has N! permutations, and unbounded
permutation generation becomes prohibitively expensive, even for rather short lists (10! =
3,628,800).

    If both Xs and Ys are provided and both lists have equal length the order is |Xs|^2. Simply
testing whether Xs is a permutation of Ys can be achieved in order log(|Xs|) using msort/2
as illustrated below with the semidet predicate is_permutation/2:

    is_permutation(Xs, Ys) :-
        msort(Xs, Sorted),
        msort(Ys, Sorted).

The example below illustrates that Xs and Ys being proper lists is not a sufficient condition to
use the above replacement.

    ?- permutation([1,2], [X,Y]).
    X = 1, Y = 2 ;
    X = 2, Y = 1 ;
    false.

Errors  type_error(list, Arg) if either argument is not a proper or partial list.

flatten(+List1, ?List2)  [det]
    Is true if List2 is a non-nested version of List1.
See also append/2
deprecated  Ending up needing flatten/3 often indicates, like append/3 for appending two lists,
a bad design. Efficient code that generates lists from generated small lists must use difference
lists, often possible through grammar rules for optimal readability.
max_member(-Max, +List)  [semidet]
    True when Max is the largest member in the standard order of terms. Fails if List is empty.

    See also
    - compare/3
    - max_list/2 for the maximum of a list of numbers.

min_member(-Min, +List)  [semidet]
    True when Min is the smallest member in the standard order of terms. Fails if List is empty.

    See also
    - compare/3
    - min_list/2 for the minimum of a list of numbers.

sum_list(+List, -Sum)  [det]
    Sum is the result of adding all numbers in List.

max_list(+List:list(number), -Max:number)  [semidet]
    True if Max is the largest number in List. Fails if List is empty.

    See also max_member/2.

min_list(+List:list(number), -Min:number)  [semidet]
    True if Min is the smallest number in List. Fails if List is empty.

    See also min_member/2.

numlist(+Low, +High, -List)  [semidet]
    List is a list \[Low, Low+1, ... High\]. Fails if High < Low.

    Errors
    - type_error(integer, Low)
    - type_error(integer, High)

is_set(@Set)  [det]
    True if Set is a proper list without duplicates. Equivalence is based on \==/2. The implementation uses sort/2, which implies that the complexity is N*log(N) and the predicate may cause a resource-error. There are no other error conditions.

list_to_set(+List, ?Set)  [det]
    True when Set has the same elements as List in the same order. The left-most copy of the duplicate is retained. The complexity of this operation is |List|^2.

    See also sort/2.

intersection(+Set1, +Set2, -Set3)  [det]
    True if Set3 unifies with the intersection of Set1 and Set2. The complexity of this predicate is |Set1| * |Set2|.

    See also ord_intersection/3.
A.13 library(nb_set): Non-backtrackable set

The library nb_set defines non-backtrackable sets, implemented as binary trees. The sets are represented as compound terms and manipulated using nb_setarg/3. Non-backtrackable manipulation of datastructures is not supported by a large number of Prolog implementations, but it has several advantages over using the database. It produces less garbage, is thread-safe, reentrant and deals with exceptions without leaking data.

Similar to the assoc library, keys can be any Prolog term, but it is not allowed to instantiate or modify a term.

One of the ways to use this library is to generate unique values on backtracking without generating all solutions first, for example to act as a filter between a generator producing many duplicates and an expensive test routine, as outlined below:

```prolog
generate_and_test(Solution) :-
    empty_nb_set(Set),
    generate(Solution),
    add_nb_set(Solution, Set, true),
    test(Solution).
```

empty_nb_set(?Set)

    True if Set is a non-backtrackable empty set.

add_nb_set(+Key, !Set)

    Add Key to Set. If Key is already a member of Set, add_nb_set/3 succeeds without modifying Set.

add_nb_set(+Key, !Set, ?New)

    If Key is not in Set and New is unified to true, Key is added to Set. If Key is in Set, New is unified to false. It can be used for many purposes:
add_nb_set(+, +, false)  Test membership
add_nb_set(+, +, true)  Succeed only if new member
add_nb_set(+, +, Var)  Succeed, binding Var

gen_nb_set(+Set, -Key)
   Generate all members of Set on backtracking in the standard order of terms. To test membership, use add_nb_set/3.

size_nb_set(+Set, -Size)
   Unify Size with the number of elements in Set.

nb_set_to_list(+Set, -List)
   Unify List with a list of all elements in Set in the standard order of terms (i.e., an ordered list).

A.14  library(www_browser): Activating your Web-browser

This library deals with the very system-dependent task of opening a web page in a browser. See also url and the HTTP package.

www_open_url(+URL)
   Open URL in an external web browser. The reason to place this in the library is to centralise the maintenance on this highly platform- and browser-specific task. It distinguishes between the following cases:

   • MS-Windows
      If it detects MS-Windows it uses win_shell/2 to open the URL. The behaviour and browser started depends on the version of Windows and Windows-shell configuration, but in general it should be the behaviour expected by the user.

   • Other platforms
      On other platforms it tests the environment variable (see getenv/2) named BROWSER or uses netscape if this variable is not set. If the browser is either mozilla or netscape, www_open_url/1 first tries to open a new window on a running browser using the -remote option of Netscape. If this fails or the browser is not mozilla or netscape the system simply passes the URL as first argument to the program.

A.15  library(option): Option list processing

See also
- library(record)
- Option processing capabilities may be declared using the directive predicate_options/3.

To be done  We should consider putting many options in an assoc or record with appropriate preprocessing to achieve better performance.

The library(option) provides some utilities for processing option lists. Option lists are commonly used as an alternative for many arguments. Examples of built-in predicates are open/4 and write_term/3. Naming the arguments results in more readable code, and the list nature makes it easy to extend the list of options accepted by a predicate. Option lists come in two styles, both of which are handled by this library.
A.15. LIBRARY(OPTION): OPTION LIST PROCESSING

Name(Value)  This is the preferred style.

Name = Value  This is often used, but deprecated.

Processing options inside time-critical code (loops) can cause serious overhead. One possibility is to define a record using library(record) and initialise this using make_<record>./2. In addition to providing good performance, this also provides type-checking and central declaration of defaults.

```prolog
:- record atts(width:integer=100, shape:oneof([box,circle])=box).

process(Data, Options) :-
    make_atts(Options, Attributes),
    action(Data, Attributes).

action(Data, Attributes) :-
    atts_shape(Attributes, Shape), ...
```

Options typically have exactly one argument. The library does support options with 0 or more than one argument with the following restrictions:

- The predicate `option/3` and `select_option/4`, involving default are meaningless. They perform an `arg(1, Option, Default)`, causing failure without arguments and filling only the first option-argument otherwise.

- `meta_options/3` can only qualify options with exactly one argument.

**`option/3`**

Get an `Option` from `OptionList`. `OptionList` can use the Name=Value as well as the Name(Value) convention.

**Parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Term of the form Name(?Value).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**`option/2`**

Get an `Option` from `OptionList`. `OptionList` can use the Name=Value as well as the Name(Value) convention. Fails silently if the option does not appear in `OptionList`.

**Parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Term of the form Name(?Value).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**`select_option/3`**

Get and remove `Option` from an option list. As `option/2`, removing the matching option from `Options` and unifying the remaining options with `RestOptions`.

**Parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Term of the form Name(?Value).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RestOptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**`select_option/4`**

Get and remove `Option` with default value. As `select_option/3`, but if `Option` is not in `Options`, its value is unified with `Default` and `RestOptions` with `Options`.

**Parameters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Term of the form Name(?Value).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Options</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RestOptions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Default</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
merge_options(+New, +Old, -Merged)  \[det\]

Merge two option lists. \textit{Merged} is a sorted list of options using the canonical format Name(Value) holding all options from \textit{New} and \textit{Old}, after removing conflicting options from \textit{Old}.

Multi-values options (e.g., proxy(Host, Port)) are allowed, where both option-name and arity define the identity of the option.

meta_options(+IsMeta, :Options0, -Options)  \[det\]

Perform meta-expansion on options that are module-sensitive. Whether an option name is module-sensitive is determined by calling call(IsMeta, Name). Here is an example:

\begin{verbatim}
meta_options(is_meta, OptionsIn, Options),
... is_meta(callback).
\end{verbatim}

Meta-options must have exactly one argument. This argument will be qualified.

To be done Should be integrated with declarations from \texttt{predicate.options/3}.

\section*{A.16 library(optparse): command line parsing}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{author} Marcus Uneson
\item \textbf{version} 0.20 (2011-04-27)
\end{itemize}

To be done : validation? e.g., numbers; file path existence; one-out-of-a-set-of-atoms

This module helps in building a command-line interface to an application. In particular, it provides functions that take an option specification and a list of atoms, probably given to the program on the command line, and return a parsed representation (a list of the customary Key(Val) by default; or optionally, a list of Func(Key, Val) terms in the style of \texttt{current.prolog_flag/2}). It can also synthesize a simple help text from the options specification.

The terminology in the following is partly borrowed from python, see http://docs.python.org/library/optparse.html#terminology. Very briefly, \textit{arguments} is what you provide on the command line and for many prologs show up as a list of atoms \texttt{Args} in \texttt{current.prolog_flag(argv, Args)}. For a typical prolog incantation, they can be divided into

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{runtime arguments}, which controls the prolog runtime; conventionally, they are ended by '–';
\item \textit{options}, which are key-value pairs (with a boolean value possibly implicit) intended to control your program in one way or another; and
\item \textit{positional arguments}, which is what remains after all runtime arguments and options have been removed (with implicit arguments – true/false for booleans – filled in).
\end{itemize}

Positional arguments are in particular used for mandatory arguments without which your program won’t work and for which there are no sensible defaults (e.g., input file names). Options, by contrast, offer flexibility by letting you change a default setting. Options are optional not only by etymology:
this library has no notion of mandatory or required options (see the python docs for other rationales than laziness).

The command-line arguments enter your program as a list of atoms, but the programs perhaps expects booleans, integers, floats or even prolog terms. You tell the parser so by providing an options specification. This is just a list of individual option specifications. One of those, in turn, is a list of ground prolog terms in the customary Name(Value) format. The following terms are recognized (any others raise error).

**opt(Key)**
Key is what the option later will be accessed by, just like for current_prolog_flag(Key, Value). This term is mandatory (an error is thrown if missing).

**shortflags(ListOfFlags)**
ListOfFlags denotes any single-dashed, single letter args specifying the current option (-s, -K, etc). Uppercase letters must be quoted. Usually ListOfFlags will be a singleton list, but sometimes aliased flags may be convenient.

**longflags(ListOfFlags)**
ListOfFlags denotes any double-dashed arguments specifying the current option (--verbose, --no-debug, etc). They are basically a more readable alternative to short flags, except

1. long flags can be specified as --flag value or --flag=value (but not as --flagvalue); short flags as -f val or -fval (but not -f=val)
2. boolean long flags can be specified as --bool-flag or --bool-flag=true or --bool-flag=true; and they can be negated as --no-bool-flag or --bool-flag=false or --bool-flag=false.

Except that shortflags must be single characters, the distinction between long and short is in calling convention, not in namespaces. Thus, if you have shortflags([v]), you can use it as -v2 or -v 2 or --v=2 or --v 2 (but not -v=2 or --v2).

Shortflags and longflags both default to []. It can be useful to have flagless options – see example below.

**meta(Meta)**
Meta is optional and only relevant for the synthesized usage message and is the name (an atom) of the metasyntactic variable (possibly) appearing in it together with type and default value (e.g, x:integer=3, interest:float=0.11). It may be useful to have named variables (x, interest) in case you wish to mention them again in the help text. If not given the Meta: part is suppressed – see example below.

**type(Type)**
Type is one of boolean, atom, integer, float, term. The corresponding argument will be parsed appropriately. This term is optional; if not given, defaults to term.

**default(Default)**
Default value. This term is optional; if not given, or if given the special value ‘.”’, an uninstantiated variable is created (and any type declaration is ignored).
help(Help)

Help is (usually) an atom of text describing the option in the help text. This term is optional (but obviously strongly recommended for all options which have flags).

Long lines are subject to basic word wrapping – split on white space, reindent, rejoin. However, you can get more control by supplying the line breaking yourself: rather than a single line of text, you can provide a list of lines (as atoms). If you do, they will be joined with the appropriate indent but otherwise left untouched (see the option \texttt{mode} in the example below).

Absence of mandatory option specs or the presence of more than one for a particular option throws an error, as do unknown or incompatible types.

As a concrete example from a fictive application, suppose we want the following options to be read from the command line (long flag(s), short flag(s), meta:type=default, help)

\begin{verbatim}
--mode  -m  atom=SCAN  data gathering mode, one of
         SCAN: do this
         READ: do that
         MAKE: make numbers
         WAIT: don't do anything

--rebuild-cache -r  boolean=true  rebuild cache in each iteration

--heisenberg-threshold -t,-h  float=0.1  heisenberg threshold

--depths, --iters -i,-d  K:integer=3  stop after K iterations

--distances  term=[1,2,3,5]  initial prolog term

--output-file -o  FILE:atom=_  write output to FILE

--label -l  atom=REPORT  report label

--verbosity -v  V:integer=2  verbosity level, 1 \leq V \leq 3
\end{verbatim}


We may also have some configuration parameters which we currently think not needs to be controlled from the command line, say path('/some/file/path').

This interface is described by the following options specification (order between the specifications of a particular option is irrelevant).

\begin{verbatim}
ExampleOptsSpec =
   [ [opt(mode ), type(atom), default('SCAN'),
      shortflags([m]), longflags(['mode'])],
      help(['data gathering mode, one of'
            'SCAN: do this'
            'READ: do that'
            'MAKE: fabricate some numbers'
            'WAIT: don’t do anything'])]

   , [opt(cache), type(boolean), default(true),
      shortflags([r]), longflags(['rebuild-cache'])]
\end{verbatim}
help('rebuild cache in each iteration')]

, [opt(threshold), type(float), default(0.1),
  shortflags([t,h]), longflags(['heisenberg-threshold']),
  help('heisenberg threshold')]

, [opt(depth), meta('K'), type(integer), default(3),
  shortflags([i,d]),longflags([depths,_iters]),
  help('stop after K iterations')]

, [opt(distances), default([1,2,3,5]),
  longflags([distances]),
  help('initial prolog term')]

, [opt(outfile), meta('FILE'), type(atom),
  shortflags([o]), longflags(['output-file']),
  help('write output to FILE')]

, [opt(label), type(atom), default('REPORT'),
  shortflags([l]), longflags([label]),
  help('report label')]

, [opt(verbosity), meta('V'), type(integer), default(2),
  shortflags([v]), longflags([verbosity]),
  help('verbosity level, 1 <= V <= 3')]

, [opt(path), default('/some/file/path/')]
).

The help text above was accessed by opt_help(ExamplesOptsSpec, HelpText). The options appear in the same order as in the OptsSpec.

Given ExampleOptsSpec, a command line (somewhat syntactically inconsistent, in order to demonstrate different calling conventions) may look as follows

ExampleArgs = ['-d5',
               '--heisenberg-threshold', '0.14',
               '--distances=[1,1,2,3,5,8]',
               '--iters', '7',
               '-ooutput.txt',
               '--rebuild-cache', 'true',
               'input.txt',
               '--verbosity=2'
               ].

opt_parse(ExampleOptsSpec, ExampleArgs, Opts, PositionalArgs) would then succeed with
Opts = [ mode('SCAN'),
        label('REPORT'),
        path('/some/file/path'),
        threshold(0.14),
        distances([1,1,2,3,5,8]),
        depth(7),
        outfile('output.txt'),
        cache(true),
        verbose(2),
        PositionalArgs = ['input.txt'].
]

Note that path('/some/file/path') showing up in Opts has a default value (of the implicit type 'term'), but no corresponding flags in OptSpec. Thus it can’t be set from the command line. The rest of your program doesn’t need to know that, of course. This provides an alternative to the common practice of asserting such hard-coded parameters under a single predicate (for instance setting(path, '/some/file/path')), with the advantage that you may seamlessly upgrade them to command-line options, should you one day find this a good idea. Just add an appropriate flag or two and a line of help text. Similarly, suppressing an option in a cluttered interface amounts to commenting out the flags.

opt_parse/5 allows more control through an additional argument list. For instance,

```
opt_parse(ExampleOptSpec, ExampleArgs, Opts, PositionalArgs, [output functor(appl_config)])
```

would instead return

```
Opts = [ appl_config(verbose, 2),
         appl_config(label, 'REPORT'),
         ...
     ]
```

This representation may be preferable with the empty-flag configuration parameter style above (perhaps with asserting appl_config/2).

A.16.1 Notes and tips

- In the example we were mostly explicit about the types. Since the default is term, which subsumes integer, float, atom, it may be possible to get away cheaper (e.g., by only giving booleans). However, it is recommended practice to always specify types: parsing becomes more reliable and error messages will be easier to interpret.

- Note that -sbar is taken to mean -s bar, not -s -b -a -r, that is, there is no clustering of flags.

- -s=foo is disallowed. The rationale is that although some command-line parsers will silently interpret this as -s =foo, this is very seldom what you want. To have an option argument start with '=' (very un-recommended), say so explicitly.

- The example specifies the option depth twice: once as -d5 and once as --iters 7. The default when encountering duplicated flags is to keeplast (this behaviour can be controlled, by ParseOption duplicated_flags).
The order of the options returned by the parsing functions is the same as given on the command line, with non-overridden defaults prepended and duplicates removed as in previous item. You should not rely on this, however.

Unknown flags (not appearing in OptSpec) will throw errors. This is usually a Good Thing. Sometimes, however, you may wish to pass along flags to an external program (say, one called by shell/2), and it means duplicated effort and a maintenance headache to have to specify all possible flags for the external program explicitly (if it even can be done). On the other hand, simply taking all unknown flags as valid makes error checking much less efficient and identification of positional arguments uncertain. A better solution is to collect all arguments intended for passing along to an indirectly called program as a single argument, probably as an atom (if you don’t need to inspect them first) or as a prolog term (if you do).

\textbf{opt_arguments(+OptSpec, -Opts, -PositionalArgs)}\quad [det]

Extract commandline options according to a specification. Convenience predicate, assuming that command-line arguments can be accessed by current_prolog_flag/2 (as in swi-prolog). For other access mechanisms and/or more control, get the args and pass them as a list of atoms to opt_parse/4 or opt_parse/5 instead.

Opt is a list of parsed options in the form Key\!(\!Value\!). Dashed args not in OptSpec are not permitted and will raise error (see tip on how to pass unknown flags in the module description). PositionalArgs are the remaining non-dashed args after each flag has taken its argument (filling in true or false for booleans). There are no restrictions on non-dashed arguments and they may go anywhere (although it is good practice to put them last). Any leading arguments for the runtime (up to and including ‘–’) are discarded.

\textbf{opt_parse(+OptSpec, +ApplArgs, -Opts, -PositionalArgs)}\quad [det]

Equivalent to opt_parse(OptSpec, ApplArgs, Opt, PositionalArgs, []).

\textbf{opt_parse(+OptSpec, +ApplArgs, -Opts, -PositionalArgs, +ParseOptions)}\quad [det]

Parse the arguments Args (as list of atoms) according to OptSpec. Any runtime arguments (typically terminated by ‘–’) are assumed to be removed already.

Opt is a list of parsed options in the form Key\!(\!Value\!), or (with the option functor(Func) given) in the form Func(Key, Value). Dashed args not in OptSpec are not permitted and will raise error (see tip on how to pass unknown flags in the module description). PositionalArgs are the remaining non-dashed args after each flag has taken its argument (filling in true or false for booleans). There are no restrictions on non-dashed arguments and they may go anywhere (although it is good practice to put them last). ParseOptions are

\textbf{output functor(Func)}

Set the functor Func of the returned options Func(Key, Value). Default is the special value 'OPTION' (upper-case), which makes the returned options have form Key\!(\!Value\!).

\textbf{duplicated flags(Keep)}

Controls how to handle options given more than once on the command line. Keep is one of keepfirst, keeplast, keepall with the obvious meaning. Default is keeplast.
allow_empty_flag_spec(Bool)
If true (default), a flag specification is not required (it is allowed that both shortflags and longflags be either [] or absent). Flagless options cannot be manipulated from the command line and will not show up in the generated help. This is useful when you have (also) general configuration parameters in your OptsSpec, especially if you think they one day might need to be controlled externally. See example in the module overview. allow_empty_flag_spec(false) gives the more customary behaviour of raising error on empty flags.

opt_help(+OptsSpec, -Help:atom) [det]
True when Help is a help string synthesized from OptsSpec.

A.17 library(ordsets): Ordered set manipulation

Ordered sets are lists with unique elements sorted to the standard order of terms (see sort/2). Exploiting ordering, many of the set operations can be expressed in order N rather than N^2 when dealing with unordered sets that may contain duplicates. The library(ordsets) is available in a number of Prolog implementations. Our predicates are designed to be compatible with common practice in the Prolog community. The implementation is incomplete and relies partly on library(oset), an older ordered set library distributed with SWI-Prolog. New applications are advised to use library(ordsets).

Some of these predicates match directly to corresponding list operations. It is advised to use the versions from this library to make clear you are operating on ordered sets. An exception is member/2. See ord_memberchk/2.

The ordsets library is based on the standard order of terms. This implies it can handle all Prolog terms, including variables. Note however, that the ordering is not stable if a term inside the set is further instantiated. Also note that variable ordering changes if variables in the set are unified with each other or a variable in the set is unified with a variable that is ‘older’ than the newest variable in the set. In practice, this implies that it is allowed to use member(X, OrdSet) on an ordered set that holds variables only if X is a fresh variable. In other cases one should cease using it as an ordset because the order it relies on may have been changed.

is_ordestr(@Term) [semidet]
True if Term is an ordered set. All predicates in this library expect ordered sets as input arguments. Failing to fullfil this assumption results in undefined behaviour. Typically, ordered sets are created by predicates from this library, sort/2 or setof/3.

ord_empty(?List) [semidet]
True when List is the empty ordered set. Simply unifies list with the empty list. Not part of Quintus.

ord_seteq(+Set1, +Set2) [semidet]
True if Set1 and Set2 have the same elements. As both are canonical sorted lists, this is the same as ==/2.

Compatibility sicstus
A.17. LIBRARY(ORDSETS): ORDERED SET MANIPULATION 363

list_to_ord_set(+List, -OrdSet)  
Transform a list into an ordered set. This is the same as sorting the list.

ord_intersect(+Set1, +Set2)  
True if both ordered sets have a non-empty intersection.

ord_disjoint(+Set1, +Set2)  
True if Set1 and Set2 have no common elements. This is the negation of ord_intersect/2.

ord_intersect(+Set1, +Set2, -Intersection)  
Intersection holds the common elements of Set1 and Set2.

deprecated Use ord_intersection/3

ord_intersection(+PowerSet, -Intersection)  
Intersection of a powerset. True when Intersection is an ordered set holding all elements common to all sets in PowerSet.

Compatibility sicstus

ord_intersection(+Set1, +Set2, -Intersection)  
Intersection holds the common elements of Set1 and Set2.

ord_intersection(+Set1, +Set2, ?Intersection, ?Difference)  
Intersection and difference between two ordered sets. Intersection is the intersection between Set1 and Set2, while Difference is defined by ord_subtract(Set2, Set1, Difference).

See also ord_intersection/3 and ord_subtract/3.

ord_add_element(+Set1, +Element, ?Set2)  
Insert an element into the set. This is the same as ord_union(Set1, [Element], Set2).

ord_del_element(+Set, +Element, -NewSet)  
Delete an element from an ordered set. This is the same as ord_subtract(Set, [Element], NewSet).

ord_memberchk(+Element, +OrdSet)  
True if Element is a member of OrdSet, compared using ==. Note that enumerating elements of an ordered set can be done using member/2.

Some Prolog implementations also provide ord_member/2, with the same semantics as ord_memberchk/2. We believe that having a semidet ord_member/2 is unacceptably inconsistent with the *chk convention. Portable code should use ord_memberchk/2 or member/2.

author Richard O’Keefe

ord_subset(+Sub, +Super)  
Is true if all elements of Sub are in Super

ord_subtract(+InOSet, +NotInOSet, -Diff)  
Diff is the set holding all elements of InOSet that are not in NotInOSet.
**ord_union(+SetOfSets, -Union)**

[det]

True if **Union** is the union of all elements in the superset **SetOfSets**. Each member of **SetOfSets** must be an ordered set, the sets need not be ordered in any way.

**author** Copied from YAP, probably originally by Richard O’Keefe.

**ord_union(+Set1, +Set2, ?Union)**

[det]

**Union** is the union of **Set1** and **Set2**

**ord_union(+Set1, +Set2, -Union, -New)**

[det]

True iff ord_union(\(Set1, Set2, Union\)) and ord_subtract(\(Set2, Set1, New\)).

**ord_symdiff(+Set1, +Set2, ?Difference)**

[det]

Is true when **Difference** is the symmetric difference of **Set1** and **Set2**. I.e., **Difference** contains all elements that are not in the intersection of **Set1** and **Set2**. The semantics is the same as the sequence below (but the actual implementation requires only a single scan).

\[
\text{ord_union(Set1, Set2, Union),} \\
\text{ord_intersection(Set1, Set2, Intersection),} \\
\text{ord_subtract(Union, Intersection, Difference).}
\]

For example:

?\(-\) ord_symdiff([1,2], [2,3], X).
X = [1,3].

---

### A.18 library(pairs): Operations on key-value lists

**author** Jan Wielemaker

**See also** keysort/2, library(assoc)

This module implements common operations on Key-Value lists, also known as **Pairs**. Pairs have great practical value, especially due to keysort/2 and the library assoc.pl.

This library is based on discussion in the SWI-Prolog mailinglist, including specifications from Quintus and a library proposal by Richard O’Keefe.

**pairs_keys_values(?Pairs, ?Keys, ?Values)**

[det]

True if **Keys** holds the keys of **Pairs** and **Values** the values.

Deterministic if any argument is instantiated to a finite list and the others are either free or finite lists. All three lists are in the same order.

**See also** pairs_values/2 and pairs_keys/2.

**pairs_values(+Pairs, -Values)**

[det]

Remove the keys from a list of Key-Value pairs. Same as pairs_keys_values(\(Pairs, _, Values\)
A.19. LIBRARY(PIO): PURE I/O

pairs_keys(+Pairs, -Keys) [det]
Remove the values from a list of Key-Value pairs. Same as pairs_keys_values(Pairs, Keys, _).

group_pairs_by_key(+Pairs, -Joined:list(Key-Values)) [det]
Group values with the same key. Pairs must be a key-sorted list. For example:

?− group_pairs_by_key([a−2, a−1, b−4], X).
X = [a−[2,1], b−[4]]

Parameters
Pairs  Key-Value list, sorted to the standard order of terms (as keysort/2 does)
Joined  List of Key-Group, where Group is the list of Values associated with Key.

transpose_pairs(+Pairs, -Transposed) [det]
Swap Key-Value to Value-Key. The resulting list is sorted using keysort/2 on the new key.

map_list_to_pairs(:Function, +List, -Keyed)
Create a Key-Value list by mapping each element of List. For example, if we have a list of lists we can create a list of Length-List using

map_list_to_pairs(length, ListOfLists, Pairs),

A.19  library(pio): Pure I/O

This library provides pure list-based I/O processing for Prolog, where the communication to the actual I/O device is performed transparently through coroutining. This module itself is just an interface to the actual implementation modules.

A.19.1  library(pure_input): Pure Input from files

author
- Ulrich Neumerkel
- Jan Wielemaker

To be done
- Provide support for alternative input readers, e.g. reading terms, tokens, etc.
- Support non-repositioning streams, such as sockets and pipes.

This module is part of pio.pl, dealing with pure input: processing input streams from the outside world using pure predicates, notably grammar rules (DCG). Using pure predicates makes non-deterministic processing of input much simpler.

Pure input uses coroutining (freeze/2) to read input from the external source into a list on demand. The overhead of lazy reading is more than compensated for by using block reads based on read_pending_input/3.
phrase_from_file(:Grammar, +File)
[non-det]
Process the content of File using the DCG rule Grammar. The space usage of this mechanism depends on the length of the not committed part of Grammar. Committed parts of the temporary list are reclaimed by the garbage collector, while the list is extended on demand. Here is a very simple definition for searching a string in a file:

... --> []|[_],...

file_contains(File, Pattern) :- phrase_from_file((..., Pattern, ...), File).

match_count(File, Pattern, Count) :- findall(x, file_contains(File, Pattern), Xs), length(Xs, Count).

This can be called as (note that the pattern must be a string (code list)):

?- match_count('pure_input.pl', "file", Count).

phrase_from_file(:Grammar, +File, +Options)
[non-det]
As phrase_from_file/2, providing additional Options. Options are passed to open/4, except for buffer_size, which is passed to set_stream/2. If not specified, the default buffer size is 512 bytes. Of particular importance are the open/4 options type and encoding.

stream_to_lazy_list(+Stream, -List)
[det]
Create a lazy list representing the character codes in Stream. It must be possible to reposition Stream. List is a list that ends in a delayed goal. List can be unified completely transparent to a (partial) list and processed transparently using DCGs, but please be aware that a lazy list is not the same as a materialized list in all respects.

Typically, this predicate is used as a building block for more high level safe predicates such as phrase_from_file/2.

To be done  Enhance of lazy list throughout the system.

A.20  library(predicate_options): Declare option-processing of predicates

Discussions with Jeff Schultz helped shaping this library

A.20.1  The strength and weakness of predicate options

Many ISO predicates accept options, e.g., open/4, write_term/3. Options offer an attractive alternative to proliferation into many predicates and using high-arity predicates. Properly defined and used, they also form a mechanism for extending the API of both system and application predicates without breaking portability. I.e., previously fixed behaviour can be replaced by dynamic behaviour
A.20. LIBRARY(PREDICATE_OPTIONS): DECLARE OPTION-PROCESSING OF PREDICATES

controlled by an option where the default is the previously defined fixed behaviour. The alternative to using options is to add an additional argument and maintain the previous definition. While a series of predicates with increasing arity is adequate for a small number of additional parameters, the untyped positional argument handling of Prolog quickly makes this unmanageable.

The ISO standard uses the extensibility offered by options by allowing implementations to extend the set of accepted options. While options form a perfect solution to maintain backward portability in a linear development model, it is not well equipped to deal with concurrent branches because

1. There is no API to find which options are supported in a particular implementation.

2. While the portability problem caused by a missing predicate in Prolog A can easily be solved by implementing this predicate, it is much harder to add processing of an additional option to an already existing predicate.

Different Prolog implementations can be seen as concurrent development branches of the Prolog language. Different sets of supported options pose a serious portability issue. Using an option $O$ that establishes the desired behaviour on system $A$ leads (on most systems) to an error or system $B$. Porting may require several actions:

- Drop $O$ (if the option is not vital, such as the layout options to `write_term/3`)
- Replace $O$ by $O_2$ (i.e., a differently named option doing the same)
- Something else (cannot be ported; requires a totally different approach, etc.)

Predicates that process options are particularly a problem when writing a compatibility layer to run programs developed for System $A$ on System $B$ because complete emulation is often hard, may cause a serious slowdown and is often not needed because the application-to-be-ported only uses options that are shared by all target Prolog implementations. Unfortunately, the consequences of a partial emulation cannot be assessed by tools.

A.20.2 Options as arguments or environment?

We distinguish two views on options. One is to see them as additional parameters that require strict existence, type and domain-checking and the other is to consider them ‘locally scoped environment variables’. Most systems adopt the first option. SWI-Prolog adopts the second: it silently ignores options that are not supported but does type and domain checking of option-values. The ‘environment’ view is commonly used in applications to create predicates supporting more options using the skeleton below. This way of programming requires that $pred1$ and $pred2$ do not interpret the same option differently. In cases where this is not true, the options must be distributed by some $pred$. We have been using this programming style for many years and in practice it turns out that the need for active distribution of options is rare. I.e., options either have distinct names or multiple predicates implement the same option but this has the desired effect. An example of the latter is the encoding option, which typically needs to be applied consistently.

```prolog
some_pred(..., Options) :-
    pred1(..., Options),
    pred2(..., Options).
```
As stated before, options provide a readable alternative to high-arity predicates and offer a robust mechanism to evolve the API, but at the cost of some runtime overhead and weaker consistency checking, both at compiletime and runtime. From our experience, the ‘environment’ approach is productive, but the consequence is that mistyped options are silently ignored. The option infrastructure described in this section tries to remedy these problems.

A.20.3 Improving on the current situation

Whether we see options as arguments or locally scoped environment variables, the most obvious way to improve on the current situation is to provide reflective support for options: discover that an argument is an option-list and find what options are supported. Reflective access to options can be used by the compiler and development environment as well as by the runtime system to warn or throw errors.

Options as types

An obvious approach to deal with options is to define the different possible option values as a type and type the argument that processes the option as list(<option_type>), as illustrated below. Considering options as types fully covers the case where we consider options as additional parameters.

```prolog
:- type open_option ---> type(stream_type) | alias(atom) | ... .
:- pred open(source_sink, open_mode, stream, list(open_option)).
```

There are three reasons for considering a different approach:

- There is no consensus about types in the Prolog world, neither about what types should look like, nor whether or not they are desirable. It is not likely that this debate will be resolved shortly.
- Considering options as types does not support the ‘environment’ view, which we consider the most productive.
- Even when using types, we need reflective access to what options are provided in order to be able to write compile or runtime conditional code.

Reflective access to options

From the above, we conclude that we require reflective access to find out whether an option is supported and valid for a particular predicate. Possible option values must be described by types. Due to lack of a type system, we use `library(error)` to describe allowed option values. Predicate options are declared using `predicate_options/3`:

```prolog
predicate_options(PI, +Arg, +Options) [det]
  Declare that the predicate PI processes options on Arg. Options is a list of options processed. Each element is one of:
  - Option(ModeAndType) PI processes Option. The option-value must comply to ModeAndType. Mode is one of + or - and Type is a type as accepted by `must_be/2`.
```
• pass_to(PI, Arg) The option-list is passed to the indicated predicate.

Below is an example that processes the option header(boolean) and passes all options to open/4:

```prolog
:- predicate_options(write_xml_file/3, 3,
                      [header(boolean),
                       pass_to(open/4, 4)]).
```

write_xml_file(File, XMLTerm, Options) :-
  open(File, write, Out, Options),
  ( option(header(true), Option, true)
  -> write_xml_header(Out)
  ; true
  ),
  ...

This predicate may only be used as a directive and is processed by expand_term/2. Option processing can be specified at runtime using assert_predicate_options/3, which is intended to support program analysis.

```prolog
assert_predicate_options(:PI, +Arg, +Options, ?New) [semidet]
```

As predicate_options(:PI, +Arg, +Options). New is a boolean indicating whether the declarations have changed. If New is provided and false, the predicate becomes semidet and fails without modifications if modifications are required.

The predicates below realise the support for compile and runtime checking for supported options.

```prolog
current_predicate_option(:PI, ?Arg, ?Option) [nondet]
```

True when Arg of PI processes Option. For example, the following is true:

```prolog
?- current_predicate_option(open/4, 4, type(text)).
true.
```

This predicate is intended to support conditional compilation using if/1 ... endif/0. The predicate current_predicate_options/3 can be used to access the full capabilities of a predicate.

```prolog
check_predicate_option(:PI, +Arg, +Option) [det]
```

Verify predicate options at runtime. Similar to current_predicate_option/3, but intended to support runtime checking.

Errors
- existence_error(option, OptionName) if the option is not supported by PI.
- type_error(Type, Value) if the option is supported but the value does not match the option type.
See must_be/2.
The predicates below can be used in a development environment to inform the user about supported options. PceEmacs uses this for colouring option names and values.

```prolog
\texttt{current\_option\_arg}(:\textit{PI}, \textit{?Arg}) \hspace{1cm} [\textit{nondet}]
True when \textit{Arg} of \textit{PI} processes predicate options. Which options are processed can be accessed using \texttt{current\_predicate\_options}/3.

\texttt{current\_predicate\_options}(:\textit{PI}, \textit{?Arg}, \textit{?Options}) \hspace{1cm} [\textit{nondet}]
True when \textit{Options} is the current active option declaration for \textit{PI} on \textit{Arg}. See \texttt{predicate\_options}/3 for the argument descriptions. If \textit{PI} is ground and refers to an undefined predicate, the autoloader is used to obtain a definition of the predicate.
```

The library can execute a complete check of your program using \texttt{check\_predicate\_options}/0:

```prolog
\texttt{check\_predicate\_options} \hspace{1cm} [\textit{det}]
Analyse loaded program for erroneous options. This predicate decompiles the current program and searches for calls to predicates that process options. For each option list, it validates whether the provided options are supported and validates the argument type. This predicate performs partial dataflow analysis to track option-lists inside a clause.

\textbf{See also} \texttt{derive\_predicate\_options}/0 can be used to derive declarations for predicates that pass options. This predicate should normally be called before \texttt{check\_predicate\_options}/0.
```

The library offers predicates that may be used to create declarations for your application. These predicates are designed to cooperate with the module system.

```prolog
\texttt{derive\_predicate\_options} \hspace{1cm} [\textit{det}]
Derive new predicate option declarations. This predicate analyses the loaded program to find clauses that process options using one of the predicates from \texttt{library(option)} or passes options to other predicates that are known to process options. The process is repeated until no new declarations are retrieved.

\textbf{See also} \texttt{autoload/0} may be used to complete the loaded program.
```

```prolog
\texttt{retractall\_predicate\_options} \hspace{1cm} [\textit{det}]
Remove all dynamically (derived) predicate options.
```

```prolog
\texttt{derived\_predicate\_options}(:\textit{PI}, \textit{?Arg}, \textit{?Options}) \hspace{1cm} [\textit{nondet}]
Derive option arguments using static analysis. True when \textit{Options} is the current \textit{derived} active option declaration for \textit{PI} on \textit{Arg}.
```

```prolog
\texttt{derived\_predicate\_options}(:+\textit{Module}) \hspace{1cm} [\textit{det}]
Derive predicate option declarations for a module. The derived options are printed to the \texttt{current\_output} stream.
```
A.21 library(prolog_pack): A package manager for Prolog

See also  Installed packages can be inspected using ?- doc_browser.
To be done
- Version logic
- Find and resolve conflicts
- Upgrade git packages
- Validate git packages
- Test packages: run tests from directory ‘test’.

The library(prolog_pack) provides the SWI-Prolog package manager. This library lets you inspect installed packages, install packages, remove packages, etc. It is complemented by the built-in attach_packs/0 that makes installed packages available as libraries.

pack_list_installed [det]
List currently installed packages. Unlike pack_list/1, only locally installed packages are displayed and no connection is made to the internet.

See also  Use pack_list/1 to find packages.

pack_info(+Pack)
Print more detailed information about Pack.

pack_search(+Query)  [det]
pack_list(+Query)  [det]
Query package server and installed packages and display results. Query is matches case-insensitively against the name and title of known and installed packages. For each matching package, a single line is displayed that provides:

- Installation status
  - p: package, not installed
  - i: installed package
- Name@Version
- Title

Hint: ?- pack_list(’’). lists all packages.

The predicates pack_list/1 and pack_search/1 are synonyms. Both contact the package server at http://www.swi-prolog.org to find available packages.

See also  pack_list_installed to list installed packages without contacting the server.

pack_install(+Spec)  [det]
Install a package. Spec is one of

- Archive file name
- HTTP URL of an archive file name. This URL may contain a star (*) for the version. In this case pack_install asks for the deirectory content and selects the latest version.
• GIT URL (not well supported yet)
• A local directory name
• A package name. This queries the package repository at http://www.swi-prolog.org

After resolving the type of package, `pack_install/2` is used to do the actual installation.

```
pack_install(+Name, +Options) [det]
Install package Name. Options:
  url(+URL)
  Source for downloading the package
  package_directory(+Dir)
  Directory into which to install the package
  interactive(+Boolean)
```

```
pack_rebuild(+Pack) [det]
  Rebuilt possible foreign components of Pack.
pack_rebuild [det]
  Rebuild foreign components of all packages.
environment(-Name, -Value) [nondet,multifile]
  Hook to define the environment for building packs. This Multifile hook extends the process environment for building foreign extensions. A value provided by this hook overrules defaults provided by `def_environment/2`. In addition to changing the environment, this may be used to pass additional values to the environment, as in:

```
prolog_pack:environment('USER', User) :-
    getenv('USER', User).
```

Parameters

Name is an atom denoting a valid variable name
Value is either an atom or number representing the value of the variable.

```
pack_upgrade(+Pack) [semidet]
Try to upgrade the package Pack.
To be done Update dependencies when updating a pack from git?
```

```
pack_remove(+Name) [det]
Remove the indicated package.
```

```
pack_property(?'Pack', ?Property) [nondet]
True when Property is a property of Pack. This interface is intended for programs that wish to interact with the package manager. Defined properties are:
```
**A.22. LIBRARY(PROLOG_XREF): CROSS-REFERENCE DATA COLLECTION LIBRARY**

- `directory` ([`Directory`])
  
  Directory into which the package is installed

- `version` ([`Version`])
  
  Installed version

- `title` ([`Title`])
  
  Full title of the package

- `author` ([`Author`])
  
  Registered author

- `download` ([`URL`])
  
  Official download URL

- `readme` ([`File`])
  
  Package README file (if present)

- `todo` ([`File`])
  
  Package TODO file (if present)

---

**A.22 library(prolog_xref): Cross-reference data collection library**

This library collects information on defined and used objects in Prolog source files. Typically these are predicates, but we expect the library to deal with other types of objects in the future. The library is a building block for tools doing dependency tracking in applications. Dependency tracking is useful to reveal the structure of an unknown program or detect missing components at compile time, but also for program transformation or minimising a program saved state by only saving the reachable objects.

This section gives a partial description of the library API, providing some insight in how you can use it for analysing your program. The library should be further modularized, moving its knowledge about, for example, XPCE into a different file and allowing for adding knowledge about other libraries such as Logtalk. **Please do not consider this interface rock-solid.**

The library is exploited by two graphical tools in the SWI-Prolog environment: the XPCE front-end started by `gxref/0` and described in section 3.7, and PceEmacs (section 3.4), which exploits this library for its syntax colouring.

For all predicates described below, `Source` is the source that is processed. This is normally a filename in any notation acceptable to the file loading predicates (see `load_files/2`). Using the hooks defined in section A.22.1 it can be anything else that can be translated into a Prolog stream holding Prolog source text. `Callable` is a callable term (see `callable/1`). Callables do not carry a module qualifier unless the referred predicate is not in the module defined `Source`.

- `xref_source(+Source)`
  
  Gather information on `Source`. If `Source` has already been processed and is still up-to-date according to the file timestamp, no action is taken. This predicate must be called on a file before information can be gathered.

- `xref_current_source(?Source)`
  
  `Source` has been processed.

- `xref_clean(+Source)`
  
  Remove the information gathered for `Source`
The library provides hooks for extending the rules it uses for finding predicates called by some programming construct.

Goal is a non-var subgoal appearing in the called object (typically a clause body). If it succeeds it must return a list of goals called by Goal. As a special construct, if a term Callable + N is returned, N variable arguments are added to Callable before further processing. For simple meta-calls a single fact suffices. Complex rules as used in the html_write library provided by the HTTP package examine the arguments and create a list of called objects.

The current system cannot deal with the same name/arity in different modules that behave differently with respect to called arguments.

A.23 library(random): Random numbers

author R.A. O’Keefe, V.S. Costa, L. Damas, Jan Wielemaker
See also Built-in function random/1: A is random(10)

This library is derived from the DEC10 library random. Later, the core random generator was moved to C. The current version uses the SWI-Prolog arithmetic functions to realise this library. These functions are based on the GMP library.
A.23. LIBRARY(RANDOM): RANDOM NUMBERS

random(-R:float) [det]
Binds R to a new random float in the open interval (0.0,1.0).

See also
- setrand/1, getrand/1 may be used to fetch/set the state.
- In SWI-Prolog, random/1 is implemented by the function random_float/0.

random_between(+L:int, +U:int, -R:int) [semidet]
Binds R to a random integer in [L,U] (i.e., including both L and U). Fails silently if U<L.

random(+L:int, +U:int, -R:int) [det]
random(+L:float, +U:float, -R:float) [det]
Generate a random integer or float in a range. If L and U are both integers, R is a random integer in the half open interval [L,U). If L and U are both floats, R is a float in the open interval (L,U).

deprecated Please use random/1 for generating a random float and random_between/3 for generating a random integer. Note that the random_between/3 includes the upper bound, while this predicate excludes the upper bound.

setrand(+State) [det]
getrand(-State) [det]
Query/set the state of the random generator. This is intended for restarting the generator at a known state only. The predicate setrand/1 accepts an opaque term returned by getrand/1. This term may be asserted, written and read. The application may not make other assumptions about this term.

For compatibility reasons with older versions of this library, setrand/1 also accepts a term rand(A,B,C), where A, B and C are integers in the range 1..30,000. This argument is used to seed the random generator. Deprecated.

Errors existence_error(random_state, _) is raised if the underlying infrastructure cannot fetch the random state. This is currently the case if SWI-Prolog is not compiled with the GMP library.

See also set_random/1 and random_property/1 provide the SWI-Prolog native implementation.

maybe [semidet]
Succeed/fail with equal probability (variant of maybe/1).

maybe(+P) [semidet]
Succeed with probability P, fail with probability 1-P

maybe(+K, +N) [semidet]
Succeed with probability K/N (variant of maybe/1)

Does X=A,Y=B or X=B,Y=A with equal probability.

random_member(-X, +List:list) [semidet]
X is a random member of List. Equivalent to random_between(1, |List|), followed by nth1/3. Fails of List is the empty list.
Compatibility  Quintus and SICStus libraries.

**random_select**(-X, +List, -Rest)  \[semidet\]
**random_select**(+X, -List, +Rest)  \[det\]

Randomly select or insert an element. Either List or Rest must be a list. Fails if List is the empty list.

Compatibility  Quintus and SICStus libraries.

**randset**(+K:int, +N:int, -S:list(int))  \[det\]

S is a sorted list of K unique random integers in the range 1..N. Implemented by enumerating 1..N and deciding whether or not the number should be part of the set. For example:

```
?- randset(5, 5, S).
S = [1, 2, 3, 4, 5].  (always)
?- randset(5, 20, S).
S = [2, 7, 10, 19, 20].
```

See also  randseq/3.

bug  Slow if N is large and K is small.

**randseq**(+K:int, +N:int, -List:list(int))  \[det\]

S is a list of K unique random integers in the range 1..N. The order is random. Works as if defined by the following code:

```
randseq(K, N, List) :-
    randset(K, N, Set),
    random_permutation(Set, List).
```

See also  randset/3.

**random_permutation**(+List, -Permutation)  \[det\]
**random_permutation**(-List, +Permutation)  \[det\]

Permutation is a random permutation of List. This is intended to process the elements of List in random order. The predicate is symmetric.

Errors  instantiation_error, type_error(list, _).

A.24  **library(readutil): Reading lines, streams and files**

This library contains primitives to read lines, files, multiple terms, etc. The package clib provides a shared object (DLL) named readutil. If the library can locate this shared object it will use the foreign implementation for reading character codes. Otherwise it will use a Prolog implementation. Distributed applications should make sure to deliver the readutil shared object if performance of these predicates is critical.
read_line_to_codes(+Stream, -Codes)
Read the next line of input from Stream and unify the result with Codes after the line has been read. A line is ended by a newline character or end-of-file. Unlike read_line_to_codes/3, this predicate removes a trailing newline character.
On end-of-file the atom end_of_file is returned. See also at_end_of_stream/0,1.

read_line_to_codes(+Stream, -Codes, ?Tail)
Difference-list version to read an input line to a list of character codes. Reading stops at the newline or end-of-file character, but unlike read_line_to_codes/2, the newline is retained in the output. This predicate is especially useful for reading a block of lines up to some delimiter. The following example reads an HTTP header ended by a blank line:

```prolog
read_header_data(Stream, Header) :-
    read_line_to_codes(Stream, Header, Tail),
    read_header_data(Header, Stream, Tail).
read_header_data("\r\n", _, _) :- !.
read_header_data("\n", _, _) :- !.
read_header_data("", _, _) :- !.
read_header_data(_, Stream, Tail) :-
    read_line_to_codes(Stream, Tail, NewTail),
    read_header_data(Tail, Stream, NewTail).
```

read_stream_to_codes(+Stream, -Codes)
Read all input until end-of-file and unify the result to Codes.

read_stream_to_codes(+Stream, -Codes, ?Tail)
Difference-list version of read_stream_to_codes/2.

read_file_to_codes(+Spec, -Codes, +Options)
Read a file to a list of character codes. Spec is a file specification for absolute_file_name/3. Codes is the resulting code list. Options is a list of options for absolute_file_name/3 and open/4. In addition, the option tail(Tail) is defined, forming a difference-list.

read_file_to_terms(+Spec, -Terms, +Options)
Read a file to a list of Prolog terms (see read/1). Spec is a file specification for absolute_file_name/3. Terms is the resulting list of Prolog terms. Options is a list of options for absolute_file_name/3 and open/4. In addition, the option tail(Tail) is defined, forming a difference-list.

A.25 library(record): Access named fields in a term

The library record provides named access to fields in a record represented as a compound term such as point(X, Y). The Prolog world knows various approaches to solve this problem, unfortunately with no consensus. The approach taken by this library is proposed by Richard O’Keefe on the SWI-Prolog mailinglist.
The approach automates a technique commonly described in Prolog text-books, where access and modification predicates are defined for the record type. Such predicates are subject to normal import/export as well as analysis by cross-referencers. Given the simple nature of the access predicates, an optimizing compiler can easily inline them for optimal performance.

A record is defined using the directive record/1. We introduce the library with a short example:

```prolog
:- record point(x:integer=0, y:integer=0).

..., default_point(Point),
    point_x(Point, X),
    set_x_of_point(10, Point, Point1),
    make_point([y(20)], YPoint),
```

The principal functor and arity of the term used defines the name and arity of the compound used as records. Each argument is described using a term of the format below.

\[
\langle \text{name} \rangle[:\langle \text{type} \rangle][=\langle \text{default} \rangle]
\]

In this definition, \( \langle \text{name} \rangle \) is an atom defining the name of the argument, \( \langle \text{type} \rangle \) is an optional type specification as defined by must_be/2 from library error, and \( \langle \text{default} \rangle \) is the default initial value. The \( \langle \text{type} \rangle \) defaults to any. If no default value is specified the default is an unbound variable.

A record declaration creates a set of predicates through term-expansion. We describe these predicates below. In this description, \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle \) refers to the name of the record (‘point’ in the example above) and \( \langle \text{name} \rangle \) to the name of an argument (field).

- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\langle \text{name} \rangle\langle \text{Record} \rangle\) (-Record)
  Create a new record where all fields have their default values. This is the same as \( \text{make}_{\langle \text{constructor} \rangle}([], \text{Record}) \).
- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\langle \text{name} \rangle\langle \text{Record} \rangle\) (+Fields, -Record)
  Create a new record where specified fields have the specified values and remaining fields have their default value. Each field is specified as a term \( \langle \text{name} \rangle(\langle \text{value} \rangle) \). See example in the introduction.
- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\langle \text{name} \rangle\langle \text{Record} \rangle\) (+Fields, -Record, -RestFields)
  Same as \( \text{make}_{\langle \text{constructor} \rangle}/2 \), but named fields that do not appear in \( \text{Record} \) are returned in \( \text{RestFields} \). This predicate is motivated by option-list processing. See library option.

- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\langle \text{name} \rangle\langle \text{Record} \rangle\langle \text{Value} \rangle\)
  Unify \( \text{Value} \) with argument in \( \text{Record} \) named \( \langle \text{name} \rangle \).

- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\text{data}(\langle \text{Name} \rangle, +\text{Record}, \langle \text{Value} \rangle)\)
  True when \( \text{Value} \) is the value for the field named \( \langle \text{Name} \rangle \) in \( \text{Record} \). This predicate does not perform type-checking.

- \( \langle \text{constructor} \rangle\langle \text{name} \rangle\langle \text{Value} \rangle\langle \text{Record} \rangle\langle \text{OldRecord} \rangle\langle \text{NewRecord} \rangle\)
  Replace the value for \( \langle \text{name} \rangle \) in \( \text{OldRecord} \) by \( \text{Value} \) and unify the result with \( \text{NewRecord} \).

2Note this is not called ‘get_{\langle \text{name} \rangle’ as it performs unification and can perfectly well instantiate the argument.
A.26 library(registry): Manipulating the Windows registry

The registry is only available on the MS-Windows version of SWI-Prolog. It loads the foreign extension plregtry.dll, providing the predicates described below. This library only makes the most common operations on the registry available through the Prolog user. The underlying DLL provides a more complete coverage of the Windows registry API. Please consult the sources in pl/src/win32/foreign/plregtry.c for further details.

In all these predicates, Path refers to a '/' separated path into the registry. This is not an atom containing '/'-characters as used for filenames, but a term using the functor //2. Windows defines the following roots for the registry: classes_root, current_user, local_machine and users.

registry_get_key(+Path, -Value)
Get the principal (default) value associated to this key. Fails silently if the key does not exist.

registry_get_key(+Path, +Name, -Value)
Get a named value associated to this key.

registry_set_key(+Path, +Value)
Set the principal (default) value of this key. Creates (a path to) the key if it does not already exist.

registry_set_key(+Path, +Name, +Value)
Associate a named value to this key. Creates (a path to) the key if it does not already exist.

registry_delete_key(+Path)
Delete the indicated key.
shell_register_file_type(+Ext, +Type, +Name, +OpenAction)
    Register a file-type. Ext is the extension to associate. Type is the type name, often something like prolog.type. Name is the name visible in the Windows file-type browser. Finally, OpenAction defines the action to execute when a file with this extension is opened in the Windows explorer.

deregister_dde(+Type, +Action, +Service, +Topic, +Command, +IfNotRunning)
    Associate DDE actions to a type. Type is the same type as used for the 2nd argument of shell_register_file_type/4, Action is the action to perform, Service and Topic specify the DDE topic to address, and Command is the command to execute on this topic. Finally, IfNotRunning defines the command to execute if the required DDE server is not present.

deregister_prolog(+Ext)
    Default registration of SWI-Prolog, which is invoked as part of the initialisation process on Windows systems. As the source also includes the above predicates, it is given as an example:

current_prolog_flag(argv, [Me|_]),
    atomic_list_concat(["", Me, " ", "$1"], OpenCommand),
    shell_register_file_type(Ext, 'prolog.type', 'Prolog Source', OpenCommand),
    shell_register_dde('prolog.type', consult, prolog, control, 'consult("%1")', Me),
    shell_register_dde('prolog.type', edit, prolog, control, 'edit("%1")', Me).

A.27 library(simplex): Solve linear programming problems

Author: Markus Triska

A linear programming problem consists of a set of (linear) constraints, a number of variables and a linear objective function. The goal is to assign values to the variables so as to maximize (or minimize) the value of the objective function while satisfying all constraints.

Many optimization problems can be modeled in this way. Consider having a knapsack with fixed capacity C, and a number of items with sizes s(i) and values v(i). The goal is to put as many items as possible in the knapsack (not exceeding its capacity) while maximizing the sum of their values.

As another example, suppose you are given a set of coins with certain values, and you are to find the minimum number of coins such that their values sum up to a fixed amount. Instances of these problems are solved below.

The simplex module provides the following predicates:

assignment(+Cost, -Assignment)
    Cost is a list of lists representing the quadratic cost matrix, where element (i,j) denotes the cost
of assigning entity $i$ to entity $j$. An assignment with minimal cost is computed and unified with \textit{Assignment} as a list of lists, representing an adjacency matrix.

\texttt{constraint(+Constraint, +S0, -S)}

Adds a linear or integrality constraint to the linear program corresponding to state $S0$. A linear constraint is of the form "Left \texttt{Op} C", where "Left" is a list of Coefficient*Variable terms (variables in the context of linear programs can be atoms or compound terms) and C is a non-negative numeric constant. The list represents the sum of its elements. \texttt{Op} can be $=, =¡$ or $¿=$. The coefficient "1" can be omitted. An integrality constraint is of the form \texttt{integral(Variable)} and constrains Variable to an integral value.

\texttt{constraint(+Name, +Constraint, +S0, -S)}

Like \texttt{constraint/3}, and attaches the name \texttt{Name} (an atom or compound term) to the new constraint.

\texttt{constraint_add(+Name, +Left, +S0, -S)}

\texttt{Left} is a list of Coefficient*Variable terms. The terms are added to the left-hand side of the constraint named \texttt{Name}. \texttt{S} is unified with the resulting state.

\texttt{gen_state(-State)}

Generates an initial state corresponding to an empty linear program.

\texttt{maximize(+Objective, +S0, -S)}

Maximizes the objective function, stated as a list of "Coefficient*Variable" terms that represents the sum of its elements, with respect to the linear program corresponding to state $S0$. \texttt{S} is unified with an internal representation of the solved instance.

\texttt{minimize(+Objective, +S0, -S)}

Analogous to \texttt{maximize/3}.

\texttt{objective(+State, -Objective)}

Unifies \texttt{Objective} with the result of the objective function at the obtained extremum. \texttt{State} must correspond to a solved instance.

\texttt{shadow_price(+State, +Name, -Value)}

Unifies \texttt{Value} with the shadow price corresponding to the linear constraint whose name is \texttt{Name}. \texttt{State} must correspond to a solved instance.

\texttt{transportation(+Supplies, +Demands, +Costs, -Transport)}

\texttt{Supplies} and \texttt{Demands} are both lists of positive numbers. Their respective sums must be equal. \texttt{Costs} is a list of lists representing the cost matrix, where an entry (i,j) denotes the cost of transporting one unit from $i$ to $j$. A transportation plan having minimum cost is computed and unified with \texttt{Transport} in the form of a list of lists that represents the transportation matrix, where element (i,j) denotes how many units to ship from $i$ to $j$.

\texttt{variable_value(+State, +Variable, -Value)}

\texttt{Value} is unified with the value obtained for \texttt{Variable}. \texttt{State} must correspond to a solved instance.

All numeric quantities are converted to rationals via \texttt{rationalize/1}, and rational arithmetic is used throughout solving linear programs. In the current implementation, all variables are implicitly constrained to be non-negative. This may change in future versions, and non-negativity constraints should therefore be stated explicitly.
A.27.1 Example 1

This is the "radiation therapy" example, taken from "Introduction to Operations Research" by Hillier and Lieberman. DCG notation is used to implicitly thread the state through posting the constraints:

```prolog
:- use_module(library(simplex)).

post_constraints -->
    constraint([0.3*x1, 0.1*x2] =< 2.7),
    constraint([0.5*x1, 0.5*x2] = 6),
    constraint([0.6*x1, 0.4*x2] >= 6),
    constraint([x1] >= 0),
    constraint([x2] >= 0).

radiation(S) :-
    gen_state(S0),
    post_constraints(S0, S1),
    minimize([0.4*x1, 0.5*x2], S1, S).
```

An example query:

```prolog
?- radiation(S), variable_value(S, x1, Val1),
   variable_value(S, x2, Val2).
```

Val1 = 15 rdiv 2
Val2 = 9 rdiv 2 ;

A.27.2 Example 2

Here is an instance of the knapsack problem described above, where C = 8, and we have two types of items: One item with value 7 and size 6, and 2 items each having size 4 and value 4. We introduce two variables, x(1) and x(2) that denote how many items to take of each type.

```prolog
knapsack_constrain(S) :-
    gen_state(S0),
    constraint([6*x(1), 4*x(2)] =< 8, S0, S1),
    constraint([x(1)] =< 1, S1, S2),
    constraint([x(2)] =< 2, S2, S).

knapsack(S) :-
    knapsack_constrain(S0),
    maximize([7*x(1), 4*x(2)], S0, S).
```

An example query yields:
That is, we are to take the one item of the first type, and half of one of the items of the other type to maximize the total value of items in the knapsack.

If items cannot be split, integrality constraints have to be imposed:

\[
\text{knapsack\_integral}(S) :\- \\
\text{knapsack\_constrain}(S0), \\
\text{constraint}(\text{integral}(x(1)), S0, S1), \\
\text{constraint}(\text{integral}(x(2)), S1, S2), \\
\text{maximize}([7*x(1), 4*x(2)], S2, S).
\]

Now the result is different:

\[
?- \text{knapsack\_integral}(S), \text{variable\_value}(S, x(1), X1), \\
\text{variable\_value}(S, x(2), X2).
\]

\[
X1 = 0 \\
X2 = 2
\]

That is, we are to take only the two items of the second type. Notice in particular that always choosing the remaining item with best performance (ratio of value to size) that still fits in the knapsack does not necessarily yield an optimal solution in the presence of integrality constraints.

A.27.3 Example 3

We are given 3 coins each worth 1, 20 coins each worth 5, and 10 coins each worth 20 units of money. The task is to find a minimal number of these coins that amount to 111 units of money. We introduce variables \(c(1), c(5)\) and \(c(20)\) denoting how many coins to take of the respective type:

\[
\text{coins -->} \\
\text{constraint}([c(1), 5*c(5), 20*c(20)] = 111), \\
\text{constraint}([c(1)] =< 3), \\
\text{constraint}([c(5)] =< 20), \\
\text{constraint}([c(20)] =< 10), \\
\text{constraint}([c(1)] =< 0), \\
\text{constraint}([c(5)] =< 0), \\
\text{constraint}([c(20)] =< 0), \\
\text{constraint}((\text{integral}(c(1)))), \\
\text{constraint}((\text{integral}(c(5)))), \\
\text{constraint}((\text{integral}(c(20)))), \\
\text{minimize}([c(1), c(5), c(20)]).
\]
coins(S) :-
    gen_state(S0),
    coins(S0, S).

An example query:

?- coins(S), variable_value(S, c(1), C1),
    variable_value(S, c(5), C5),
    variable_value(S, c(20), C20).

C1 = 1
C5 = 2
C20 = 5

A.28 library(thread_pool): Resource bounded thread management

See also http_handler/3 and http_spawn/2.

The module library(thread_pool) manages threads in pools. A pool defines properties of its
member threads and the maximum number of threads that can coexist in the pool. The call
thread_create_in_pool/4 allocates a thread in the pool, just like thread_create/3. If
the pool is fully allocated it can be asked to wait or raise an error.

The library has been designed to deal with server applications that receive a variety of requests,
such as HTTP servers. Simply starting a thread for each request is a bit too simple minded for such
servers:

- Creating many CPU intensive threads often leads to a slow-down rather than a speedup.
- Creating many memory intensive threads may exhaust resources
- Tasks that require little CPU and memory but take long waiting for external resources can run
  many threads.

Using this library, one can define a pool for each set of tasks with comparable characteristics
and create threads in this pool. Unlike the worker-pool model, threads are not started immediately.
Depending on the design, both approaches can be attractive.

The library is implemented by means of a manager thread with the fixed thread id
__thread_pool_manager. All state is maintained in this manager thread, which receives and
processes requests to create and destroy pools, create threads in a pool and handle messages from
terminated threads. Thread pools are not saved in a saved state and must therefore be recreated using
the initialization/1 directive or otherwise during startup of the application.
A.28. LIBRARY(THREAD_POOL): RESOURCE BOUNDED THREAD MANAGEMENT

.thread_pool_create(+Pool, +Size, +Options) [det]
Create a pool of threads. A pool of threads is a declaration for creating threads with shared
properties (stack sizes) and a limited number of threads. Threads are created using
.thread_create_in_pool/4. If all threads in the pool are in use, the behaviour depends
on the wait option of thread_create_in_pool/4 and the backlog option described
below. Options are passed to thread_create/3, except for

.backlog(+MaxBackLog)
Maximum number of requests that can be suspended. Default is infinite. Otherwise
it must be a non-negative integer. Using backlog(0) will never delay thread creation for
this pool.

The pooling mechanism does not interact with the detached state of a thread. Threads can
be created both detached and normal and must be joined using thread_join/2 if they are
not detached.

bug The thread creation option at_exit is reserved for internal use by this library.

.thread_pool_destroy(+Name) [det]
Destroy the thread pool named Name.

Errors existence_error(thread_pool, Name).

current_thread_pool(?Name) [nondet]
True if Name refers to a defined thread pool.

.thread_pool_property(?Name, ?Property) [nondet]
True if Property is a property of thread pool Name. Defined properties are:

.options(Options)
Thread creation options for this pool

.free(Size)
Number of free slots on this pool

.size(Size)
Total number of slots on this pool

.members(ListOfIDs)
ListOfIDs is the list or threads running in this pool

.running(Running)
Number of running threads in this pool

.backlog(Size)
Number of delayed thread creations on this pool

.thread_create_in_pool(+Pool, -Goal, -Id, +Options) [det]
Create a thread in Pool. Options overrule default thread creation options associated to the pool.
In addition, the following option is defined:
wait(+Boolean)
If true (default) and the pool is full, wait until a member of the pool completes. If false, throw a resource_error.

Errors
- resource_error(threads_in_pool(Pool)) is raised if wait is false or the backlog limit has been reached.
- existence_error(thread_pool, Pool) if Pool does not exist.

A.29 library(ugraphs): Unweighted Graphs

Authors: Richard O’Keefe & Vitor Santos Costa

Implementation and documentation are copied from YAP 5.0.1. The ugraph library is based on code originally written by Richard O’Keefe. The code was then extended to be compatible with the SICStus Prolog ugraphs library. Code and documentation have been cleaned and style has been changed to be more in line with the rest of SWI-Prolog.

The ugraphs library was originally released in the public domain. The YAP version is covered by the Perl Artistic license, version 2.0. This code is dual-licensed under the modified GPL as used for all SWI-Prolog libraries or the Perl Artistic license, version 2.0.

The routines assume directed graphs; undirected graphs may be implemented by using two edges. Originally graphs were represented in two formats. The SICStus library and this version of ugraphs.pl only use the S-representation. The S-representation of a graph is a list of (vertex-neighbors) pairs, where the pairs are in standard order (as produced by keysort) and the neighbors of each vertex are also in standard order (as produced by sort). This form is convenient for many calculations. Each vertex appears in the S-representation, even if it has no neighbors.

vertices_edges_to_ugraph(+Vertices, +Edges, -Graph)
Given a graph with a set of Vertices and a set of Edges, Graph must unify with the corresponding S-representation. Note that vertices without edges will appear in Vertices but not in Edges. Moreover, it is sufficient for a vertex to appear in Edges.

?- vertices_edges_to_ugraph([], [1-3, 2-4, 4-5, 1-5], L).
   L = [1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5], 5-[]]

In this case all vertices are defined implicitly. The next example shows three unconnected vertices:

?- vertices_edges_to_ugraph([6, 7, 8], [1-3, 2-4, 4-5, 1-5], L).
   L = [1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5], 5-[], 6-[], 7-[], 8-[] ?

vertices(+Graph, -Vertices)
Unify Vertices with all vertices appearing in Graph. Example:
edges(+Graph, -Edges)
Unify Edges with all edges appearing in Graph. Example:

?- edges([1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5], 5-[]], L).
L = [1-3, 1-5, 2-4, 4-5]

add_vertices(+Graph, +Vertices, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with a new graph obtained by adding the list of Vertices to Graph. Example:

?- add_vertices([1-[3,5], 2-[]], [0,1,2,9], NG).
NG = [0-[], 1-[3,5], 2-[], 9-[]]

del_vertices(+Graph, +Vertices, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with a new graph obtained by deleting the list of Vertices and all edges that start from or go to a vertex in Vertices from Graph. Example:

?- del_vertices([2,1],
[1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5],
  5-[], 6-[], 7-[2,6], 8-[]],
NL).
NL = [3-[], 4-[5], 5-[], 6-[], 7-[6], 8-[]]

add_edges(+Graph, +Edges, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with a new graph obtained by adding the list of Edges to Graph. Example:

?- add_edges([1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5],
  5-[], 6-[], 7-[2,6], 8-[]],
[1-6, 2-3, 3-2, 5-7, 3-2, 4-5],
NL).
NL = [1-[3,5,6], 2-[3,4], 3-[2], 4-[5],
  5-[7], 6-[], 7-[], 8-[]]

del_edges(+Graph, +Edges, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with a new graph obtained by removing the list of Edges from Graph. Notice that no vertices are deleted. Example:

?- del_edges([1-[3,5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[5], 5-[], 6-[], 7-[2,6], 8-[]],
[1-6, 2-3, 3-2, 5-7, 3-2, 4-5, 1-3],
NL).
NL = [1-[5], 2-[4], 3-[], 4-[], 5-[], 6-[], 7-[], 8-[]]
transpose(+Graph, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with a new graph obtained from Graph by replacing all edges of the form V1-V2 by edges of the form V2-V1. The cost is $O(|V|^2)$. Notice that an undirected graph is its own transpose. Example:

```
?- transpose([1-[3,5],2-[4],3-[],4-[5],
    5-[],6-[],7-[],8-[]], NL).
NL = [1-[],2-[],3-[1],4-[2],5-[1,4],6-[],7-[],8-[]]
```

neighbours(+Vertex, +Graph, -Vertices)
Unify Vertices with the list of neighbours of vertex Vertex in Graph. Example:

```
?- neighbours(4,[1-[3,5],2-[4],3-[],
    4-[1,2,7,5],5-[],6-[],7-[],8-[]], NL).
NL = [1,2,7,5]
```

neighbors(+Vertex, +Graph, -Vertices)
American version of neighbours/3.

complement(+Graph, -NewGraph)
Unify NewGraph with the graph complementary to Graph. Example:

```
?- complement([1-[3,5],2-[4],3-[],
    4-[1,2,7,5],5-[],6-[],7-[],8-[]], NL).
NL = [1-[2,4,6,7,8],2-[1,3,5,6,7,8],3-[1,2,4,5,6,7,8],
    4-[3,5,6,8],5-[1,2,3,4,6,7,8],6-[1,2,3,4,5,7,8],
    7-[1,2,3,4,5,6,8],8-[1,2,3,4,5,6,7]]
```

compose(+LeftGraph, +RightGraph, -NewGraph)
Compose NewGraph by connecting the drains of LeftGraph to the sources of RightGraph. Example:

```
?- compose([1-[2],2-[3]], [2-[4],3-[1,2,4]], L).
L = [1-[4], 2-[1,2,4], 3-[]]
```

ugraph_union(+Graph1, +Graph2, -NewGraph)
NewGraph is the union of Graph1 and Graph2. Example:

```
?- ugraph_union([1-[2],2-[3]], [2-[4],3-[1,2,4]], L).
L = [1-[2], 2-[3,4], 3-[1,2,4]]
```

top_sort(+Graph, -Sort)
Generate the set of nodes Sort as a topological sorting of Graph, if one is possible. A topological sort is possible if the graph is connected and acyclic. In the example we show how topological sorting works for a linear graph:
?- top_sort([1-[2], 2-[3], 3-[]], L).
L = [1, 2, 3]

top_sort(+Graph, -Sort0, -Sort)
Generate the difference list Sort-Sort0 as a topological sorting of Graph, if one is possible.

transitive_closure(+Graph, -Closure)
Generate the graph Closure as the transitive closure of Graph. Example:

?- transitive_closure([1-[2,3],2-[4,5],4-[6]],L).
L = [1-[2,3,4,5,6], 2-[4,5,6], 4-[6]]

reachable(+Vertex, +Graph, -Vertices)
Unify Vertices with the set of all vertices in Graph that are reachable from Vertex. Example:

?- reachable(1,[1-[3,5],2-[4],3-[],4-[5],5-[]],V).
V = [1, 3, 5]

A.30  library(url): Analysing and constructing URL

author
   - Jan Wielemaker
   - Lukas Faulstich

deprecated  New code should use library(uri), provided by the clib package.

This library deals with the analysis and construction of a URL, Universal Resource Locator. URL is the basis for communicating locations of resources (data) on the web. A URL consists of a protocol identifier (e.g. HTTP, FTP, and a protocol-specific syntax further defining the location. URLs are standardized in RFC-1738.

The implementation in this library covers only a small portion of the defined protocols. Though the initial implementation followed RFC-1738 strictly, the current is more relaxed to deal with frequent violations of the standard encountered in practical use.

global_url(+URL, +Base, -Global)
[det]
Translate a possibly relative URL into an absolute one.

Errors  syntax_error(illegal_url) if URL is not legal.

is_absolute_url(+URL)
True if URL is an absolute URL. That is, a URL that starts with a protocol identifier.

http_location(?Parts, ?Location)
Construct or analyze an HTTP location. This is similar to parse_url/2, but only deals with the location part of an HTTP URL. That is, the path, search and fragment specifiers. In the HTTP protocol, the first line of a message is
Parameters

**Location** Atom or list of character codes.

**parse_url(+URL, -Attributes)** [det]

Construct or analyse a **URL**. **URL** is an atom holding a **URL** or a variable. **Attributes** is a list of components. Each component is of the format **Name(Value)**. Defined components are:

**protocol(Protocol)**

The used protocol. This is, after the optional `url:`, an identifier separated from the remainder of the **URL** using `:`. `parse_url/2` assumes the `http` protocol if no protocol is specified and the **URL** can be parsed as a valid HTTP url. In addition to the RFC-1738 specified protocols, the `file` protocol is supported as well.

**host(Host)**

Host-name or IP-address on which the resource is located. Supported by all network-based protocols.

**port(Port)**

Integer port-number to access on the `\arg\{Host\}`. This only appears if the port is explicitly specified in the **URL**. Implicit default ports (e.g., 80 for HTTP) do not appear in the part-list.

**path(Path)**

(File-) path addressed by the **URL**. This is supported for the `ftp`, `http` and `file` protocols. If no path appears, the library generates the path `/`.

**search(ListOfNameValue)**

Search-specification of HTTP **URL**. This is the part after the `?`, normally used to transfer data from HTML forms that use the `GET` protocol. In the **URL** it consists of a `www-form-encoded` list of `Name=Value` pairs. This is mapped to a list of Prolog `Name=Value` terms with decoded names and values.

**fragment(Fragment)**

Fragment specification of HTTP **URL**. This is the part after the `#` character.

The example below illustrates all of this for an HTTP **URL**.

```prolog

P = [ protocol(http),
       host('www.xyz.org'),
       fragment(x),
       search([ msg = 'Hello World!' ]),
       path('/hello')
 ]```
By instantiating the parts-list this predicate can be used to create a URL.

\[\text{parse_url}(+URL, +BaseURL, -Attributes)\]  
Similar to \text{parse_url}/2 for relative URLs. If \text{URL} is relative, it is resolved using the absolute \text{URL BaseURL}.

\[\text{www_form_encode}(+Value, -XWWWFormEncoded)\]  
\[\text{www_form_encode}(-Value, +XWWWFormEncoded)\]
En/decode to/from application/x-www-form-encoded. Encoding encodes all characters except RFC 3986 \textit{unreserved} (ASCII \textit{alnum} (see \text{code_type}/2)), and one of "-." using percent encoding. Newline is mapped to \texttildelow\%OD\%OA. When decoding, newlines appear as a single newline (\texttt{\textbackslash n}) character.

Note that a space is encoded as \texttt{\%20} instead of +. Decoding decodes both to a space.

\texttt{deprecated} Use \text{url_encoded}/3 for new code.

\[\text{set_url_encoding}(?Old, +New)\]
Query and set the encoding for URLs. The default is \texttt{utf8}. The only other defined value is \texttt{iso_latin_1}.

\texttt{To be done} Having a global flag is highly inconvenient, but a work-around for old sites using ISO Latin 1 encoding.

\[\text{url_iri}(+Encoded, -Decoded)\]  
\[\text{url_iri}(-Encoded, +Decoded)\]
Convert between a URL, encoding in US-ASCII and an IRI. An IRI is a fully expanded Unicode string. Unicode strings are first encoded into UTF-8, after which \%-encoding takes place.

\[\text{parse_url_search}(?Spec, ?Fields:list(Name=Value))\]
Construct or analyze an HTTP search specification. This deals with form data using the MIME-type \texttt{=application/x-www-form-urlencoded=} as used in HTTP GET requests.

\[\text{file_name_to_url}(+File, -URL)\]  
\[\text{file_name_to_url}(-File, +URL)\]
Translate between a filename and a file:
\texttt{/ / URL}.

\texttt{To be done} Current implementation does not deal with paths that need special encoding.

A.31 library(varnumbers): Utilities for numbered terms

\texttt{See also} numbervars/4, =\texttt{@=}/2 (\text{variant}/2).

\texttt{Compatibility} This library was introduced by Quintus and available in many related implementations, although not with exactly the same set of predicates.

This library provides the inverse functionality of the built-in numbervars/3. Note that this library suffers from the known issues that \texttt{'$VAR'(X)} is a normal Prolog term and, -unlike the built-in numbervars-, the inverse predicates do \texttt{not} process cyclic terms. The following predicate is true for any acyclic term that contains no \texttt{'$VAR'(X)}, \texttt{integer(X)} terms and no constraint variables:
always_true(X) :-
    copy_term(X, X2),
    numbervars(X),
    varnumbers(X, Copy),
    Copy =@= X2.

numbervars(+Term) [det]
    Number variables in Term using $VAR(N)$. Equivalent to numbervars(Term, 0, _).
    
    See also numbervars/3, numbervars/4

varnumbers(+Term, -Copy) [det]
    Inverse of numbervars/1. Equivalent to varnumbers(Term, 0, Copy).

varnumbers(+Term, +Start, -Copy) [det]
    Inverse of numbervars/3. True when Copy is a copy of Term with all variables numbered
    \( \geq \) Start consistently replaced by fresh variables. Variables in Term are shared
    with Copy rather than replaced by fresh variables.
    
    Errors domain_error(acyclic_term, Term) if Term is cyclic.
    Compatibility Quintus, SICStus. Not in YAP version of this library

max_var_number(+Term, +Start, -Max) [det]
    True when Max is the max of Start and the highest numbered $VAR(N)$ term.
    
    author Vitor Santos Costa
    Compatibility YAP
This appendix describes a number of predicates which enable the Prolog user to inspect the Prolog environment and manipulate (or even redefine) the debugger. They can be used as entry points for experiments with debugging tools for Prolog. The predicates described here should be handled with some care as it is easy to corrupt the consistency of the Prolog system by misusing them.

### B.1 Examining the Environment Stack

**prolog_current_frame(-Frame)**  
Unify `Frame` with an integer providing a reference to the parent of the current local stack frame. A pointer to the current local frame cannot be provided as the predicate succeeds deterministically and therefore its frame is destroyed immediately after succeeding.

**prolog_current_choice(-Choice)**  
Unify `Choice` with an integer provided a reference to the last choice-point. Fails if the current environment has no choicepoints. See also `prolog_choice_attribute/3`.

**prolog_frame_attribute(+Frame, +Key, :Value)**  
Obtain information about the local stack frame `Frame`. `Frame` is a frame reference as obtained through `prolog_current_frame/1,prolog_trace_interception/4` or this predicate. The key values are described below.

- **alternative**  
  `Value` is unified with an integer reference to the local stack frame in which execution is resumed if the goal associated with `Frame` fails. Fails if the frame has no alternative frame.

- **has_alternatives**  
  `Value` is unified with `true` if `Frame` still is a candidate for backtracking; `false` otherwise.

- **goal**  
  `Value` is unified with the goal associated with `Frame`. If the definition module of the active predicate is not the calling context, the goal is represented as `<module> : <goal>`. Do not instantiate variables in this goal unless you **know** what you are doing! Note that the returned term may contain references to the frame and should be discarded before the frame terminates.\(^1\)

---

\(^1\)The returned term is actually an illegal Prolog term that may hold references from the global- to the local stack to preserve the variable names.
parent_goal

If Value is instantiated to a callable term, find a frame executing the predicate described by Value and unify the arguments of Value to the goal arguments associated with the frame. This is intended to check the current execution context. The user must ensure the checked parent goal is not removed from the stack due to last-call optimisation and be aware of the slow operation on deeply nested calls.

predicate_indicator

Similar to goal, but only returning the \([\langle module\rangle]\langle name\rangle/\langle arity\rangle) term describing the term, not the actual arguments. It avoids creating an illegal term as goal and is used by the library prolog_stack.

clause

Value is unified with a reference to the currently running clause. Fails if the current goal is associated with a foreign (C) defined predicate. See also nth_clause/3 and clause_property/2.

level

Value is unified with the recursion level of Frame. The top level frame is at level ‘0’.

parent

Value is unified with an integer reference to the parent local stack frame of Frame. Fails if Frame is the top frame.

context_module

Value is unified with the name of the context module of the environment.

top

Value is unified with true if Frame is the top Prolog goal from a recursive call back from the foreign language. false otherwise.

hidden

Value is unified with true if the frame is hidden from the user, either because a parent has the hide-childs attribute (all system predicates), or the system has no trace-me attribute.

skipped

Value is true if this frame was skipped in the debugger.

pc

Value is unified with the program-pointer saved on behalf of the parent-goal if the parent-goal is not owned by a foreign predicate or belongs to a compound meta-call (e.g., call((a,b))).

argument(N)

Value is unified with the N-th slot of the frame. Argument 1 is the first argument of the goal. Arguments above the arity refer to local variables. Fails silently if N is out of range.

prolog_choice_attribute(+ChoicePoint, +Key, -Value)

Extract attributes of a choice-point. ChoicePoint is a reference to a choice-point as passed to prolog_trace_interception/4 on the 3-th argument or obtained using prolog_current_choice/1. Key specifies the requested information:

parent

Requests a reference to the first older choice-point.
B.2. GLOBAL CUTS

frame
Requests a reference to the frame to which the choice-point refers.

type
Requests the type. Defined values are clause (the goal has alternative clauses), foreign (non-deterministic foreign predicate), jump (clause internal choice-point), top (first dummy choice-point), catch (catch/3 to allow for undo), debug (help the debugger), or none (has been deleted).

This predicate is used for the graphical debugger to show the choice-point stack.

deterministic(-Boolean)
Unifies its argument with true if no choicepoint exists that is more recent than the entry of the clause in which it appears. There are few realistic situations for using this predicate. It is used by the prolog/0 toplevel to check whether Prolog should prompt the user for alternatives. Similar results can be achieved in a more portable fashion using call_cleanup/2.

B.2 Global cuts

prolog_cut_to(+Choice)
Prunes all choice-points created since Choice. Can be used together with prolog_current_choice/1 to implement parent cuts. This predicate is in the hackers corner because it should not be used in normal Prolog code. It may be used to create new high level control structures, particularly for compatibility purposes.

B.3 Interception the Tracer

prolog_trace_interception(+Port, +Frame, +Choice, -Action)
Dynamic predicate, normally not defined. This predicate is called from the SWI-Prolog debugger just before it would show a port. If this predicate succeeds the debugger assumes the trace action has been taken care of and continues execution as described by Action. Otherwise the normal Prolog debugger actions are performed.

Port denotes the reason to activate the tracer (‘port’ in the 4/5-port, but with some additions):

call
Normal entry through the call-port of the 4-port debugger.

redo(PC)
Normal entry through the redo-port of the 4-port debugger. The redo port signals resuming a predicate to generate alternative solutions. If PC is 0 (zero), clause-indexing has found another clause that will be tried next. Otherwise, PC is the program counter in the current clause where execution continues. This implies we are dealing with an in-clause choice point left by e.g., ;/2. Note that non-determinism in foreign predicates are also handled using an in-clause choice point.

unify
The unify-port represents the neck instruction, signalling the end of the head-matching process. This port is normally invisible. See leash/1 and visible/1.
exit
The exit-port signals the goal is proved. It is possible for the goal to have alternatives. See prolog_frame_attribute/3 to examine the goal-stack.

fail
The fail-port signals final failure of the goal.

exception(Except)
An exception is raised and still pending. This port is activated on each parent frame of the frame generating the exception until the exception is caught or the user restarts normal computation using retry. Except is the pending exception term.

break(PC)
A break instruction is executed. PC is program counter. This port is used by the graphical debugger.

cut_call(PC)
A cut is encountered at PC. This port is used by the graphical debugger to visualise the effect of the cut.

cut_exit(PC)
A cut has been executed. See cut_call(PC) for more information.

Frame is a reference to the current local stack frame, which can be examined using prolog_frame_attribute/3. Choice is a reference to the last choice-point and can be examined using prolog_choice_attribute/3. Action must be unified with a term that specifies how execution must continue. The following actions are defined:

abort
Abort execution. See abort/0.

continue
Continue (i.e., creep in the commandline debugger).

fail
Make the current goal fail.

ignore
Step over the current goal without executing it.

nodebug
Continue execution in normal nodebugging mode. See nodebug/0.

retry
Retry the current frame.

retry(Frame)
Retry the given frame. This must be a parent of the current frame.

skip
Skip over the current goal (i.e., skip in the commandline debugger).

Together with the predicates described in section 4.37 and the other predicates of this chapter this predicate enables the Prolog user to define a complete new debugger in Prolog. Besides this, it enables the Prolog programmer to monitor the execution of a program. The example below records all goals trapped by the tracer in the database.
B.4. ADDING CONTEXT TO ERRORS: PROLOG_EXCEPTION_HOOK

prolog_trace_interception(Port, Frame, _PC, continue) :-
    prolog_frame_attribute(Frame, goal, Goal),
    prolog_frame_attribute(Frame, level, Level),
    recordz(trace, trace(Port, Level, Goal)).

To trace the execution of 'go' this way the following query should be given:

?- trace, go, notrace.

prolog_skip_frame(-Frame)

Indicate Frame as a skipped frame and set the 'skip level' (see prolog_skip_level/2 to
the recursion depth of Frame. The effect of the skipped flag is that a redo on a child of this
frame is handled differently. First, a redo trace is called for the child, where the skip-level is
set to redo_in_skip. Next, the skip level is set to skip-level of the skipped frame.

prolog_skip_level(-Old, +New)

Unify Old with the old value of 'skip level' and then set this level according to New. New
is an integer, the atom very_deep (meaning don’t skip) or the atom skip_in_redo
(see prolog_skip_frame/1). The 'skip level' is a setting of each Prolog thread that
disables the debugger on all recursion levels deeper than the level of the variable. See also
prolog_skip_frame/1.

B.4 Adding context to errors: prolog_exception_hook

The hook prolog_exception_hook/4 has been introduced in SWI-Prolog 5.6.5 to provide ded-
icated exception handling facilities for application frameworks, for example non-interactive server
applications that wish to provide extensive context for exceptions for offline debugging.

prolog_exception_hook(+ExceptionIn, -ExceptionOut, +Frame, +CatcherFrame)

This hook predicate, if defined in the module user, is between raising an exception and
handling it. It is intended to allow a program adding additional context to an exception to
simplify diagnosing the problem. ExceptionIn is the exception term as raised by throw/1 or
one of the built-in predicates. The output argument ExceptionOut describes the exception that
is actually raised. Frame is the innermost frame. See prolog_frame_attribute/3 and
the library prolog_stack for getting information from this. CatcherFrame is a reference to
the frame calling the matching catch/3 or none if the exception is not caught.

The hook is run in 'nodebug' mode. If it succeeds, ExceptionOut is considered the current
exception. If it fails, ExceptionIn is used for further processing. The hook is never called
recursively. The hook is not allowed to modify ExceptionOut in such a way that it no longer
unifies with the catching frame.

Typically, prolog_exception_hook/4 is used to fill the second argument of
error(Formal, Context) exceptions. Formal is defined by the ISO standard, while SWI-
Prolog defines Context as a term context(Location, Message). Location is bound to a term
⟨name⟩/⟨arity⟩ by the kernel. This hook can be used to add more information on the calling
context, such as a full stack trace.
Applications that use exceptions as part of normal processing must do a quick test of the environment before starting expensive gathering information on the state of the program.

The hook can call `trace/0` to enter trace mode immediately. For example imagine an application performing an unwanted division by zero while all other errors are expected and handled. We can force the debugger using the hook definition below. Run the program in debug mode (see `debug/0`) to preserve as much as possible of the error context.

```prolog
user:prolog_exception_hook(
    error(evaluation_error(zero_divisor), _),
    _, _, _) :-
    trace, fail.
```

**B.5 Hooks using the exception predicate**

This section describes the predicate `exception/3`, which can be defined by the user in the module `user` as a multifile predicate. Unlike the name suggests, this is actually a hook predicate that has no relation to Prolog exceptions as defined by the ISO predicates `catch/3` and `throw/1`.

The predicate `exception/3` is called by the kernel on a couple of events, allowing the user to ‘fix’ errors just-in-time. The mechanism allows for lazy creation of objects such as predicates.

`exception(+Exception, +Context, -Action)`

Dynamic predicate, normally not defined. Called by the Prolog system on run-time exceptions that can be repaired ‘just-in-time’. The values for `Exception` are described below. See also `catch/3` and `throw/1`.

If this hook predicate succeeds it must instantiate the `Action` argument to the atom `fail` to make the operation fail silently, `retry` to tell Prolog to retry the operation or `error` to make the system generate an exception. The action `retry` only makes sense if this hook modified the environment such that the operation can now succeed without error.

**undefined_predicate**

`Context` is instantiated to a predicate-indicator ([module]:⟨name⟩/⟨arity⟩). If the predicate fails Prolog will generate an `existence_error` exception. The hook is intended to implement alternatives to the built-in autoloader, such as autoloading code from a database. Do not use this hook to suppress existence errors on predicates. See also `unknown` and section 2.13.

**undefined_global_variable**

`Context` is instantiated to the name of the missing global variable. The hook must call `nb_setval/2` or `b_setval/2` before returning with the action `retry`.

**B.6 Hooks for integrating libraries**

Some libraries realise an entirely new programming paradigm on top of Prolog. An example is XPCE which adds an object-system to Prolog as well as an extensive set of graphical primitives. SWI-Prolog provides several hooks to improve the integration of such libraries. See also section 4.5 for editing hooks and section 4.10.3 for hooking into the message system.
B.7 Hooks for loading files

All loading of source files is achieved by `load_files/2`. The hook `prolog_load_file/2` can be used to load Prolog code from non-files or even load entirely different information, such as foreign files.

`prolog_load_file(+Spec, +Options)`
Load a single object. If this call succeeds, `load_files/2` assumes the action has been taken.

---

`prolog_list_goal(:Goal)`
Hook, normally not defined. This hook is called by the 'L' command of the tracer in the module `user` to list the currently called predicate. This hook may be defined to list only relevant clauses of the indicated `Goal` and/or show the actual source code in an editor. See also `portray/1` and `multifile/1`.

`prolog:debug_control_hook(:Action)`
Hook for the debugger-control predicates that allows the creator of more high-level programming languages to use the common front-end predicates to control the debugger. For example, XPCE uses these hooks to allow for spying methods rather than predicates. `Action` is one of:

- **spy(Spec)**
  Hook in `spy/1`. If the hook succeeds `spy/1` takes no further action.

- **nospy(Spec)**
  Hook in `nospy/1`. If the hook succeeds `nospy/1` takes no further action. If `spy/1` is hooked, it is advised to place a complementary hook for `nospy/1`.

- **nospyall**
  Hook in `nospyall/0`. Should remove all spy-points. This hook is called in a failure-driven loop.

- **debugging**
  Hook in `debugging/0`. It can be used in two ways. It can report the status of the additional debug points controlled by the above hooks and fail to let the system report the others, or it succeeds, overruling the entire behaviour of `debugging/0`.

`prolog:help_hook(+Action)`
Hook into `help/0` and `help/1`. If the hook succeeds, the built-in actions are not executed. For example, `?- help(picture).` is caught by the XPCE help-hook to give help on the class `picture`. Defined actions are:

- **help**
  User entered plain `help/0` to give default help. The default performs `help(help/1)`, giving help on help.

- **help(What)**
  Hook in `help/1` on the topic `What`.

- **apropos(What)**
  Hook in `apropos/1` on the topic `What`.
care of. This hook is only called if Options does not contain the stream(Input) option. The hook must be defined in the module user.

The http_load provides an example, loading Prolog sources directly from an HTTP server.

\texttt{prolog:comment\_hook(+Comments, +Pos, +Term)}

This hook allows for processing —structured— comments encountered by the compiler. The reader collects all comments found from the current position to the end of the next term. It calls this hook providing a list of Position-Comment in Comments, the start position of the next term in Pos, and the next term itself in Term. All positions are stream position terms. This hook is exploited by the documentation system. See \texttt{stream\_position\_data/3}. See also read\_term/3.

### B.8 Readline Interaction

The following predicates are available if SWI-Prolog is linked to the GNU readline library. This is by default the case on non-Windows installations and indicated by the Prolog flag \texttt{readline}.\footnote{\texttt{swipl-win.exe} uses its own history system and does not support these predicates.} See also read\_line(3).

\texttt{rl\_read\_init\_file(+File)}

Read a readline initialisation file. Readline by default reads `~/.inputrc`. This predicate may be used to read alternative readline initialisation files.

\texttt{rl\_add\_history(+Line)}

Add a line to the Control-P/Control-N history system of the readline library.

\texttt{rl\_write\_history(+FileName)}

Write current history to \textit{FileName}. Can be used from \texttt{at\_halt/1} to save the history.

\texttt{rl\_read\_history(+FileName)}

Read history from \textit{FileName}, appending to the current history.
Compatibility with other Prolog dialects

This chapter explains issues for writing portable Prolog programs. It was started after discussion with Vitor Santos Costa, the leading developer of YAP Prolog\(^1\) YAP and SWI-Prolog have expressed the ambition to enhance the portability beyond the trivial Prolog examples, including complex libraries involving foreign code.

Although it is our aim to enhance compatibility, we are still faced with many incompatibilities between the dialects. As a first step both YAP and SWI will provide some instruments that help developing portable code. A first release of these tools appeared in SWI-Prolog 5.6.43. Some of the facilities are implemented in the base system, others in the library dialect.pl.

- The Prolog flag `dialect` is an unambiguous and fast way to find out which Prolog dialect executes your program. It has the value `swi` for SWI-Prolog and `yap` on YAP.

- The Prolog flag `version_data` is bound to a term `swi(Major, Minor, Patch, Extra)`

- Conditional compilation using `:- if(Condition) ... :- endif` is supported. See section 4.3.1.

- The predicate `expects_dialect/1` allows for specifying for which Prolog system the code was written.

- The predicates `exists_source/1` and `source_exports/2` can be used to query the library content. The `require/1` directive can be used to get access to predicates without knowing their location.

- The module predicates `use_module/1`, `use_module/2` have been extended with a notion for ‘import-except’ and ‘import-as’. This is particularly useful together with `reexport/1` and `reexport/2` to compose modules from other modules and mapping names.

- Foreign code can expect `_SWI_PROLOG__` when compiled for SWI-Prolog and `_YAP_PROLOG__` when compiled on YAP.

\[\text{:- expects_dialect(+Dialect)}\]

This directive states that the code following the directive is written for the given Prolog `Dialect`. See also `dialect`. The declaration holds until the end of the file in which it appears. The current dialect is available using `prolog_load_context/2`.

The exact behaviour of this predicate is still subject to discussion. Of course, if `Dialect` matches the running dialect the directive has no effect. Otherwise we check for the existence of `library(dialect/Dialect)` and load it if the file is found. Currently, this file has this functionality:

\(^1\)http://yap.sourceforge.net/
Define system predicates of the requested dialect we do not have.

- Apply `goal_expansion/2` rules that map conflicting predicates to versions emulating the requested dialect. These expansion rules reside in the dialect compatibility module, but are applied if `prolog_load_context(dialect, Dialect)` is active.

- Modify the search path for library directories, putting libraries compatible with the target dialect before the native libraries.

- Setup support for the default filename extension of the dialect.

```prolog
eexists_source(+Spec)
Is true if `Spec` exists as a Prolog source. `Spec` uses the same conventions as `load_files/2`. Fails without error if `Spec` cannot be found.

```
```
```
```
```prolog
source_exports(+Spec, +Export)
Is true if source `Spec` exports `Export`, a predicate indicator. Fails without error otherwise.

C.1 Some considerations for writing portable code

The traditional way to write portable code is to define custom predicates for all potentially non-portable code and define these separately for all Prolog dialects one wishes to support. Here are some considerations.

- Probably the best reason for this is that it allows to define minimal semantics required by the application for the portability predicates. Such functionality can often be mapped efficiently to the target dialect. Contrary, if code was written for dialect `X`, the defined semantics are those of dialect `X`. Emulating all extreme cases and full error handling compatibility may be tedious and result in a much slower implementation that needed. Take for example `call_cleanup/2`. The SICStus definition is fundamentally different from the SWI definition, but 99% of the applications just want to make calls like below to guarantee `StreamIn` is closed, even if `process/1` misbehaves.

```
call_cleanup(process(StreamIn), close(In))
```

- As a drawback, the code becomes full of `my_call_cleanup`, etc. and every potential portability conflict needs to be abstracted. It is hard for people who have to maintain such code later to grasp the exact semantics of the `my_*` predicates and applications that combine multiple libraries using this compatibility approach are likely to encounter conflicts between the portability layers. A good start is not to use `my_*`, but a prefix derived from the library or application name or names that explain the intended semantics more precisely.

- Another problem is that most code is initially not written with portability in mind. Instead, ports are requested by users or arise from the desire to switch Prolog dialect. Typically, we want to achieve compatibility with the new Prolog dialect with minimal changes, often keeping compatibility with the original dialect(s). This problem is well known from the C/Unix world and we advise anyone to study the philosophy of GNU autoconf, from which we will illustrate some highlights below.
C.1. SOME CONSIDERATIONS FOR WRITING PORTABLE CODE

The GNU autoconf suite, known to most people as configure, was an answer to the frustrating life of Unix/C programmers when Unix dialects were about as abundant and poorly standardised as Prolog dialects today. Writing a portable C program can only be achieved using cpp, the C preprocessor. The C preprocessor performs two tasks: macro expansion and conditional compilation. Prolog realises macro expansion through term_expansion/2 and goal_expansion/2. Conditional compilation is achieved using :- if(Condition) as explained in section 4.3.1. The situation appears similar.

The important lesson learned from GNU autoconf is that the last resort for conditional compilation to achieve portability is to switch on the platform or dialect. Instead, GNU autoconf allows you to write tests for specific properties of the platform. Most of these are whether or not some function or file is available. Then there are some standard tests for difficult-to-write-portable situations and finally there is a framework that allows you to write arbitrary C programs and check whether they can be compiled and/or whether they show the intended behaviour. Using a separate configure program is needed in C, as you cannot perform C compilation step or run C programs from the C preprocessor. In most Prolog environments we do not need this distinction as the compiler is integrated into the runtime environment and Prolog has excellent reflexion capabilities.

We must learn from the distinction to test for features instead of platform (dialect), as this makes the platform-specific code robust for future changes of the dialect. Suppose we need compare/3 as defined in this manual. The compare/3 predicate is not part of the ISO standard, but many systems support it and it is not unlikely it will become ISO standard or the intended dialect will start supporting it. GNU autoconf strongly advises to test for the availability:

```prolog
:- if(+current_predicate(_, compare(_,_,_))).
compare(<, Term1, Term2) :-
  Term1 @< Term2, !.
compare(>, Term1, Term2) :-
  Term1 @> Term2, !.
compare(=, Term1, Term2) :-
  Term1 == Term2.
:- endif.
```

This code is much more robust against changes to the intended dialect and, possibly at least as important, will provide compatibility with dialects you didn’t even consider porting to right now.

In a more challenging case, the target Prolog has compare/3, but the semantics are different. What to do? One option is to write a my_compare/3 and change all occurrences in the code. Alternatively you can rename calls using goal_expansion/2 like below. This construct will not only deal with Prolog dialects lacking compare/3 as well as those that only implement it for numeric comparison or have changed the argument order. Of course, writing rock-solid code would require a complete test-suite, but this example will probably cover all Prolog dialects that allow for conditional compilation, have core ISO facilities and provide goal_expansion/2, the things we claim a Prolog dialect should have to start writing portable code for it.

```prolog
:- if(+catch(compare(<,a,b), _, fail)).
compare_standard_order(<, Term1, Term2) :-
  Term1 @< Term2, !.
compare_standard_order(>, Term1, Term2) :-
  Term1 @> Term2, !.
```

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compare_standard_order(=, Term1, Term2) :-
    Term1 == Term2.

goal_expansion(compare(Order, Term1, Term2),
    compare_standard_order(Order, Term1, Term2)).
    :- endif.
Glossary of Terms

anonymous [variable]
The variable _ is called the anonymous variable. Multiple occurrences of _ in a single term are not shared.

arguments
Arguments are terms that appear in a compound term. A1 and a2 are the first and second argument of the term myterm(A1, a2).

arity
Argument count (= number of arguments) of a compound term.

assert
Add a clause to a predicate. Clauses can be added at either end of the clause-list of a predicate. See asserta/1 and assertz/1.

atom
Textual constant. Used as name for compound terms, to represent constants or text.

backtracking
Search process used by Prolog. If a predicate offers multiple clauses to solve a goal, they are tried one-by-one until one succeeds. If a subsequent part of the proof is not satisfied with the resulting variable binding, it may ask for an alternative solution (= binding of the variables), causing Prolog to reject the previously chosen clause and try the next one.

binding [of a variable]
Current value of the variable. See also backtracking and query.

built-in [predicate]
Predicate that is part of the Prolog system. Built-in predicates cannot be redefined by the user, unless this is overruled using redefine_system_predicate/1.

body
Part of a clause behind the neck operator (: -).

clause
‘Sentence’ of a Prolog program. A clause consists of a head and body separated by the neck operator (: -) or it is a fact. For example:

```
parent(X) :-
    father(X, _).
```
Expressed as “X is a parent if X is a father of someone”. See also variable and predicate.

**compile**  
Process where a Prolog program is translated to a sequence of instructions. See also interpreted. SWI-Prolog always compiles your program before executing it.

**compound [term]**  
Also called structure. It consists of a name followed by $N$ arguments, each of which are terms. $N$ is called the arity of the term.

**context module**  
If a term is referring to a predicate in a module, the context module is used to find the target module. The context module of a goal is the module in which the predicate is defined, unless this predicate is module transparent, in which case the context module is inherited from the parent goal. See also module_transparent/1 and meta-predicate.

**dynamic [predicate]**  
A dynamic predicate is a predicate to which clauses may be asserted and from which clauses may be retracted while the program is running. See also update view.

**exported [predicate]**  
A predicate is said to be exported from a module if it appears in the public list. This implies that the predicate can be imported into another module to make it visible there. See also use_module/[1,2].

**fact**  
Clause without a body. This is called a fact because, interpreted as logic, there is no condition to be satisfied. The example below states john is a person.

```prolog
person(john).
```

**fail**  
A goal is said to have failed if it could not be proven.

**float**  
Computer’s crippled representation of a real number. Represented as ‘IEEE double’.

**foreign**  
Computer code expressed in languages other than Prolog. SWI-Prolog can only cooperate directly with the C and C++ computer languages.

**functor**  
Combination of name and arity of a compound term. The term $foo(a, b, c)$ is said to be a term belonging to the functor $foo/3$. $foo/0$ is used to refer to the atom $foo$.

**goal**  
Question stated to the Prolog engine. A goal is either an atom or a compound term. A goal either succeeds, in which case the variables in the compound terms have a binding, or it fails if Prolog fails to prove it.
hashing

Indexing technique used for quick lookup.

head

Part of a clause before the neck operator (:-). This is an atom or compound term.

imported [predicate]

A predicate is said to be imported into a module if it is defined in another module and made available in this module. See also chapter 5.

indexing

Indexing is a technique used to quickly select candidate clauses of a predicate for a specific goal. In most Prolog systems, indexing is done (only) on the first argument of the head. If this argument is instantiated to an atom, integer, float or compound term with functor, hashing is used to quickly select all clauses where the first argument may unify with the first argument of the goal. SWI-Prolog supports just-in-time and multi-argument indexing. See section 2.17.

integer

Whole number. On all implementations of SWI-Prolog integers are at least 64-bit signed values. When linked to the GNU GMP library, integer arithmetic is unbounded. See also current_prolog_flag/2, flags bounded, max_integer and min_integer.

interpreted

As opposed to compiled, interpreted means the Prolog system attempts to prove a goal by directly reading the clauses rather than executing instructions from an (abstract) instruction set that is not or only indirectly related to Prolog.

meta-predicate

A predicate that reasons about other predicates, either by calling them, (re)defining them or querying properties.

module

Collection of predicates. Each module defines a name-space for predicates. built-in predicates are accessible from all modules. Predicates can be published (exported) and imported to make their definition available to other modules.

module transparent [predicate]

A predicate that does not change the context module. Sometimes also called a meta-predicate.

multifile [predicate]

Predicate for which the definition is distributed over multiple source files. See multifile/1.

neck

Operator (:-) separating head from body in a clause.

operator

Symbol (atom) that may be placed before its operand (prefix), after its operand (postfix) or between its two operands (infix).

In Prolog, the expression a+b is exactly the same as the canonical term + (a, b).
operand
   Argument of an operator.

precedence
   The priority of an operator. Operator precedence is used to interpret \(a+b*c\) as \(+\(a, *(b,c)\)\).

predicate
   Collection of clauses with the same functor (name/arity). If a goal is proved, the system looks for a predicate with the same functor, then uses indexing to select candidate clauses and then tries these clauses one-by-one. See also backtracking.

predicate indicator
   Term of the form Name/Arity (traditional) or Name//=Arity (ISO DCG proposal), where Name is an atom and Arity a non-negative integer. It acts as an indicator (or reference) to a predicate or DCG rule.

priority
   In the context of operators a synonym for precedence.

program
   Collection of predicates.

property
   Attribute of an object. SWI-Prolog defines various *_property predicates to query the status of predicates, clauses, etc.

prove
   Process where Prolog attempts to prove a query using the available predicates.

public list
   List of predicates exported from a module.

query
   See goal.

retract
   Remove a clause from a predicate. See also dynamic, update view and assert.

shared
   Two variables are called shared after they are unified. This implies if either of them is bound, the other is bound to the same value:

```
?- A = B, A = a.
A = B, B = a.
```

singleton [variable]
   Variable appearing only one time in a clause. SWI-Prolog normally warns for this to avoid you making spelling mistakes. If a variable appears on purpose only once in a clause, write it as _ (see anonymous). Rules for naming a variable and avoiding a warning are given in section 2.15.1.
solution

*Bindings resulting from a successfully proven goal.*

structure

Synonym for *compound* term.

string

Used for the following representations of text: a packed array (see section 4.23, SWI-Prolog specific), a list of character codes or a list of one-character *atoms*.

succeed

A *goal* is said to have *succeeded* if it has been *proven*.

term

Value in Prolog. A *term* is either a *variable*, *atom*, *integer*, *float* or *compound* term. In addition, SWI-Prolog also defines the type *string*.

transparent

See module transparent.

unify

Prolog process to make two terms equal by assigning variables in one term to values at the corresponding location of the other term. For example:

```
?- foo(a, B) = foo(A, b).
A = a,
B = b.
```

Unlike assignment (which does not exist in Prolog), unification is not directed.

update view

How Prolog behaves when a *dynamic predicate* is changed while it is running. There are two models. In most older Prolog systems the change becomes immediately visible to the *goal*, in modern systems including SWI-Prolog, the running *goal* is not affected. Only new *goals* ‘see’ the new definition.

variable

A Prolog variable is a value that ‘is not yet bound’. After *binding* a variable, it cannot be modified. *Backtracking* to a point in the execution before the variable was bound will turn it back into a variable:

```
?- A = b, A = c.
false.

?- (A = b; true; A = c).
A = b ;
true ;
A = c .
```

See also *unify*. 
SWI-Prolog License Conditions and Tools

SWI-Prolog licensing aims at a large audience, combining ideas from the Free Software Foundation and the less principal Open Source Initiative. The license aims at the following:

- Make SWI-Prolog and its libraries ‘as free as possible’.
- Allow for easy integration of contributions. See section E.2.
- Free software can build on SWI-Prolog without limitations.
- Non-free (open or proprietary) software can be produced using SWI-Prolog, although contributed pure GPL-ed components cannot be used.

To achieve this, different parts of the system have different licenses. SWI-Prolog programs consist of a mixture of ‘native’ code (source compiled to machine instructions) and ‘virtual machine’ code (Prolog source compiled to SWI-Prolog virtual machine instructions, covering both compiled SWI-Prolog libraries and your compiled application).

For maximal coherence between free licenses, we start with the two prime licenses from the Free Software Foundation, the GNU General Public License (GPL) and the Lesser GNU General Public License (LGPL), after which we add a proven (used by the GNU-C compiler runtime library as well as the GNU ClassPath project) exception to deal with the specific nature of compiled virtual machine code in a saved state.

E.1 The SWI-Prolog kernel and foreign libraries

The SWI-Prolog kernel and our foreign libraries are distributed under the LGPL. A Prolog executable consists of the combination of these ‘native’ code components and Prolog virtual machine code. The SWI-Prolog swipl-rc utility allows for disassembling and re-assembling these parts, a process satisfying article 6b of the LGPL.

Under the LGPL SWI-Prolog can be linked to code distributed under arbitrary licenses, provided a number of requirements are fulfilled. The most important requirement is that, if an application relies on a modified version of SWI-Prolog, the modified sources must be made available.

E.1.1 The SWI-Prolog Prolog libraries

Lacking a satisfactory technical solution to handle article 6 of the LGPL, this license cannot be used for the Prolog source code that is part of the SWI-Prolog system (both libraries and kernel code). This situation is comparable to libgcc, the runtime library used with the GNU C-compiler. Therefore, we use the same proven license terms as this library. The libgcc license is the with a special exception. Below we rephrase this exception adjusted to our needs:
As a special exception, if you link this library with other files, compiled with a Free Software compiler, to produce an executable, this library does not by itself cause the resulting executable to be covered by the GNU General Public License. This exception does not however invalidate any other reasons why the executable file might be covered by the GNU General Public License.

E.2 Contributing to the SWI-Prolog project

To achieve maximal coherence using SWI-Prolog for Free and Non-Free software we advise using LGPL for contributed foreign code and using GPL with the SWI-Prolog exception for Prolog code for contributed modules.

As a rule of thumb it is advised to use the above licenses whenever possible, and use a strict GPL compliant license only if the module contains other code under strict GPL compliant licenses.

E.3 Software support to keep track of license conditions

Given the above, it is possible that SWI-Prolog packages and extensions will rely on the GPL. The predicates below allow for registering license requirements for Prolog files and foreign modules. The predicate eval_license/0 reports which components from the currently configured system are distributed under copy-left and open source enforcing licenses (the GPL) and therefore must be replaced before distributing linked applications under non-free license conditions.

\section{eval-license}
Evaluate the license conditions of all loaded components. If the system contains one or more components that are licenced under GPL-like restrictions the system indicates this program may only be distributed under the GPL license as well as which components prohibit the use of other license conditions.

\section{license(+LicenseId, +Component)}
Register the fact that Component is distributed under a license identified by LicenseId. The most important LicenseId’s are:

\subsection{swipl}
Indicates this module is distributed under the GNU General Public License (GPL) with the SWI-Prolog exception:\footnote{This exception is a straight re-phrasing of the license used for libgcc, the GNU-C runtime library facing similar technical issues.}

\begin{quote}
As a special exception, if you link this library with other files, compiled with SWI-Prolog, to produce an executable, this library does not by itself cause the resulting executable to be covered by the GNU General Public License. This exception does not however invalidate any other reasons why the executable file might be covered by the GNU General Public License.
\end{quote}
This should be the default for software contributed to the SWI-Prolog project as it allows the community to prosper both in the free and non-free world. Still, people using SWI-Prolog to create non-free applications must contribute sources to improvements they make to the community.

lgpl

This is the default license for foreign libraries linked with SWI-Prolog. Use
PL_license() to register the condition from foreign code.

gpl

Indicates this module is strictly Free Software, which implies it cannot be used together with any module that is incompatible with the GPL. Please only use these conditions when forced by other code used in the component.

Other licenses known to the system are guile, gnu_ada, x11, expat, sml, public_domain, cryptix, bsd, zlib, lgpl_compatible and gpl_compatible. New licenses can be defined by adding clauses for the multifile predicate license:license/3. Below is an example. The second argument is either gpl or lgpl to indicate compatibility with these licenses. Other values cause the license to be interpreted as proprietary. Proprietary licenses are reported by eval_license/0. See the file boot/license.pl for details.

```prolog
:- multifile license:license/3.

license:license(mylicense, lgpl,
    [ comment('My personal license'),
      url('http://www.mine.org/license.html')
    ]).

:- license(mylicense).
```

**license(+LicenseId)**

Intended as a directive in Prolog source files. It takes the current filename and calls license/2.

**void PL_license(const char *LicenseId, const char *Component)**

Intended for the install() procedure of foreign libraries. This call can be made before PL_initialise().

### E.4 License conditions inherited from used code

#### E.4.1 Cryptographic routines

Cryptographic routines are used in variant_sha1/2 and crypt. These routines are provided under the following conditions.

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Summary

F.1 Predicates

The predicate summary is used by the Prolog predicate `apropos/1` to suggest predicates from a keyword.

@@/2 Call using calling context
!/0 Cut (discard choicepoints)
, /2 Conjunction of goals
->/2 If-then-else
*->/2 Soft-cut
./2 Consult. Also list constructor
;/2 Disjunction of goals. Same as |/2
<2/2 Arithmetic smaller
=2/2 Unification
=. ./2 “Univ.” Term to list conversion
=: =/2 Arithmetic equal
=</2 Arithmetic smaller or equal
==/2 Identical
=@=/2 Structural identical
=\=/2 Arithmetic not equal
>/2 Arithmetic larger
>=/2 Arithmetic larger or equal
?=2/2 Test of terms can be compared now
@<2/2 Standard order smaller
@=</2 Standard order smaller or equal
@>/2 Standard order larger
@>=/2 Standard order larger or equal
\+/1 Negation by failure. Same as not/1
\=2/2 Not unifiable
\=2/2 Not identical
\=@=/2 Not structural identical
^2/2 Existential quantification (bagof/3, setof/3)
|2/2 Disjunction of goals. Same as ;/2
{}1/1 DCG escape; constraints
abolish/1 Remove predicate definition from the database
abolish/2 Remove predicate definition from the database
abort/0 Abort execution, return to top level
absolute_file_name/2 Get absolute path name
absolute_file_name/3 Get absolute path name with options
access_file/2 Check access permissions of a file
acyclic_term/1 Test term for cycles
add_import_module/3 Add module to the auto-import list
add_nb_set/2 Add term to a non-backtrackable set
add_nb_set/3 Add term to a non-backtrackable set
append/1 Append to a file
apply/2 Call goal with additional arguments
apropos/1 online_help Search manual
arg/3 Access argument of a term
assoc_to_list/2 Convert association tree to list
assert/1 Add a clause to the database
assert/2 Add a clause to the database, give reference
asserta/1 Add a clause to the database (first)
asserta/2 Add a clause to the database (first)
assertion/1 Make assertions about your program
assertz/1 Add a clause to the database (last)
assertz/2 Add a clause to the database (last)
attach_console/0 Attach I/O console to thread
attribute_goals/3 Project attributes to goals
attr_unify_hook/2 Attributed variable unification hook
attr_portray_hook/2 Attributed variable print hook
attvar/1 Type test for attributed variable
at_end_of_stream/0 Test for end of file on input
at_end_of_stream/1 Test for end of file on stream
at_halt/1 Register goal to run at halt/1
atom/1 Type check for an atom
atom_chars/2 Convert between atom and list of characters
atom_codes/2 Convert between atom and list of characters codes
atom_concat/3 Append two atoms
atom_length/2 Determine length of an atom
atom_prefix/2 Test for start of atom
atom_number/2 Convert between atom and number
atom_to_term/3 Convert between atom and term
atomic/1 Type check for primitive
atomic_concat/3 Concatenate two atomic values to an atom
atomic_list_concat/2 Append a list of atoms
atomic_list_concat/3 Append a list of atoms with separator
autoload/0 Autoload all predicates now
autoload_path/1 Add directories for autoloading
b_getval/2 Fetch backtrackable global variable
b_setval/2 Assign backtrackable global variable
bagof/3 Find all solutions to a goal
between/3 Integer range checking/generating
blob/2 Type check for a blob
break/0 Start interactive top-level
byte_count/2 Byte-position in a stream
call/1  Call a goal
    call/[2..]  Call with additional arguments
    call_cleanup/3  Guard a goal with a cleanup-handler
    call_cleanup/2  Guard a goal with a cleanup-handler
    call_residue/2  Find residual attributed variables
    call_shared_object_function/2  UNIX: Call C-function in shared (.so) file
    call_with_depth_limit/3  Prove goal with bounded depth
    callable/1  Test for atom or compound term
    catch/3  Call goal, watching for exceptions
    char_code/2  Convert between character and character code
    char_conversion/2  Provide mapping of input characters
    char_type/2  Classify characters
    character_count/2  Get character index on a stream
    chdir/1  Compatibility: change working directory
    chr_constraint/1  CHR Constraint declaration
    chr_show_store/1  List suspended CHR constraints
    chr_trace/0  Start CHR tracer
    chr_type/1  CHR Type declaration
    chr_notrace/0  Stop CHR tracer
    chr_leash/1  Define CHR leashed ports
    chr_option/2  Specify CHR compilation options
    clause/2  Get clauses of a predicate
    clause/3  Get clauses of a predicate
    clause_property/2  Get properties of a clause
    close/1  Close stream
    close/2  Close stream (forced)
    close_dde_conversation/1  Win32: Close DDE channel
    close_shared_object/1  UNIX: Close shared library (.so file)
    collation_key/2  Sort key for locale dependent ordering
    comment_hook/3  (hook) handle comments in sources
    compare/3  Compare, using a predicate to determine the order
    compile_aux_clauses/1  Compile predicates for goal_expansion/2
    compile_clauses/1  Compile dynamic code to static
    compiling/0  Is this a compilation run?
    compound/1  Test for compound term
    code_type/2  Classify a character-code
    consult/1  Read (compile) a Prolog source file
    context_module/1  Get context module of current goal
    convert_time/8  Break time stamp into fields
    convert_time/2  Convert time stamp to string
    copy_stream_data/2  Copy all data from stream to stream
    copy_stream_data/3  Copy n bytes from stream to stream
    copy_predicate_clauses/2  Copy clauses between predicates
    copy_term/2  Make a copy of a term
    copy_term/3  Copy a term and obtain attribute-goals
    copy_term_nat/2  Make a copy of a term without attributes
    create_prolog_flag/3  Create a new Prolog flag
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et/1  Edit a file, predicate, module (extensible)
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else/0  Part of conditional compilation (directive)
empty_assoc/1  Create/test empty association tree
empty_nb_set/1  Test/create an empty non-backtrackable set
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F.2 Library predicates

F.2.1 aggregate

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aggregate/4 Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template.
aggregate_all/3 Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template.
aggregate_all/4 Aggregate bindings in Goal according to Template.
foreach/2 True if conjunction of results is true.
free_variables/4 Find free variables in bagof/setof template.

F.2.2 apply

exclude/3 Filter elements for which Goal fails.
foldl/4 Fold a list, using arguments of the list as left argument.
foldl/5 Fold a list, using arguments of the list as left argument.
foldl/6 Fold a list, using arguments of the list as left argument.
foldl/7 Fold a list, using arguments of the list as left argument.
include/3 Filter elements for which Goal succeeds.
maplist/2 True if Goal can successfully be applied on all elements of List.
maplist/3 As maplist/2, operating on pairs of elements from two lists.
maplist/4 As maplist/2, operating on triples of elements from three lists.
maplist/5 As maplist/2, operating on quadruples of elements from four lists.
partition/4 Filter elements of List according to Pred.
partition/5 Filter List according to Pred in three sets.
scanl/4 Left scan of list.
scanl/5 Left scan of list.
scanl/6 Left scan of list.
scanl/7 Left scan of list.

F.2.3 assoc

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assoc_to_keys/2 Translate assoc into a key list
assoc_to_values/2 Translate assoc into a value list
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## F.2.5 charsio

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<td>Convert Atom into a list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atom_to_chars/3</td>
<td>Convert Atom into a difference list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>format_to_chars/3</td>
<td>Use format/2 to write to a list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>format_to_chars/4</td>
<td>Use format/2 to write to a difference list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number_to_chars/2</td>
<td>Convert Atom into a list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>number_to_chars/3</td>
<td>Convert Number into a difference list of character codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>open_chars_stream/2</td>
<td>Open Codes as an input stream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read_from_chars/2</td>
<td>Read Codes into Term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>read_term_from_chars/3</td>
<td>Read Codes into Term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with_output_to_chars/2</td>
<td>Run Goal as with once/1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with_output_to_chars/3</td>
<td>Run Goal as with once/1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with_output_to_chars/4</td>
<td>Same as with_output_to_chars/3 using an explicit stream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write_to_chars/2</td>
<td>Write a term to a code list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write_to_chars/3</td>
<td>Write a term to a code list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## F.2.6 check

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>check/0</td>
<td>Program completeness and consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list_undefined/0</td>
<td>List undefined predicates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list_autoload/0</td>
<td>List predicates that require autoload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>list_redefined/0</td>
<td>List locally redefined predicates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## F.2.7 csv

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>csv_read_file/2</td>
<td>Read a CSV file into a list of rows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv_read_file/3</td>
<td>Read a CSV file into a list of rows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv_read_file_row/3</td>
<td>True when Row is a row in File.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv_write_file/2</td>
<td>Write a list of Prolog terms to a CSV file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv_write_file/3</td>
<td>Write a list of Prolog terms to a CSV file.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv_write_stream/3</td>
<td>Write the rows in Data to Stream.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv/3</td>
<td>Prolog DCG to ‘read/write’ CSV data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>csv/4</td>
<td>Prolog DCG to ‘read/write’ CSV data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F.2.8 lists

append/2  Concatenate a list of lists.
append/3  List1 AndList2 is the concatenation of List1 and List2.
delete/3  Delete matching elements from a list.
flatten/2  Is true if List2 is a non-nested version of List1.
intersection/3  True if Set3 unifies with the intersection of Set1 and Set2.
is_set/1  True if Set is a proper list without duplicates.
last/2  Succeeds when Last is the last element of List.
list_to_set/2  True when Set has the same elements as List in the same order.
max_list/2  True if Max is the largest number in List.
max_member/2  True when Max is the largest member in the standard order of terms.
member/2  True if Elem is a member of List.
min_list/2  True if Min is the smallest number in List.
min_member/2  True when Min is the smallest member in the standard order of terms.
nexsto/3  True if Y follows X in List.
nth0/3  True when Elem is the Index’th element of List.
nth0/4  Select/insert element at index.
nth1/3  Is true when Elem is the Index’th element of List.
nth1/4  As nth0/4, but counting starts at 1.
numlist/3  List is a list [Low, Low+1, ... High].
permutation/2  True when Xs is a permutation of Ys.
prefix/2  True iff Part is a leading substring of Whole.
proper_length/2  True when Length is the number of elements in the proper list List.
reverse/2  Is true when the elements of List2 are in reverse order compared to List1.
same_length/2  Is true when List1 and List2 are lists with the same number of elements.
select/3  Is true when List1, with Elem removed, results in List2.
select/4  Select two elements from two lists at the same place.
selectchk/3  Semi-deterministic removal of first element in List that unifies with Elem.
selectchk/4  Semi-deterministic version of select/4.
subset/2  True if all elements of SubSet belong to Set as well.
subtract/3  Delete all elements in Delete from Set.
sum_list/2  Sum is the result of adding all numbers in List.
union/3  True if Set3 unifies with the union of Set1 and Set2.

F.2.9 debug

assertion/1  Acts similar to C assert() macro.
assertion_failed/2  This hook is called if the Goal of assertion/1 fails.
debug/1  Add/remove a topic from being printed.
debug/3  Format a message if debug topic is enabled.
debug_message_context/1  Specify additional context for debug messages.
debug_print_hook/3  Hook called by debug/3.
debugging/1  Examine debug topics.
debugging/2  Examine debug topics.
list_debug_topics/0  List currently known debug topics and their setting.
nodebug/1  Add/remove a topic from being printed.

**F.2.10 option**

merge_options/3  Merge two option lists.
meta_options/3  Perform meta-expansion on options that are module-sensitive.
option/2  Get an Option from OptionList.
option/3  Get an Option Qfrom OptionList.
select_option/3  Get and remove Option from an option list.
select_option/4  Get and remove Option with default value.

**F.2.11 optparse**

opt_arguments/3  Extract commandline options according to a specification.
opt_help/2  True when Help is a help string synthesized from OptsSpec.
opt_parse/4  Equivalent to opt_parse(OptsSpec, ApplArgs, Opts, PositionalArgs, []).
opt_parse/5  Parse the arguments Args (as list of atoms) according to OptsSpec.

**F.2.12 ordsets**

is_ordset/1  True if Term is an ordered set.
list_to_ord_set/2  Transform a list into an ordered set.
ord_add_element/3  Insert an element into the set.
ord_del_element/3  Delete an element from an ordered set.
ord_disjoint/2  True if Set1 and Set2 have no common elements.
ord_empty/1  True when List is the empty ordered set.
ord_intersect/2  True if both ordered sets have a non-empty intersection.
ord_intersect/3  Intersection holds the common elements of Set1 and Set2.
ord_intersection/2  Intersection of a powerset.
ord_intersection/3  Intersection holds the common elements of Set1 and Set2.
ord_intersection/4  Intersection and difference between two ordered sets.
ord_memberchk/2  True if Element is a member of OrdSet, compared using ==.
ord_seteq/2  True if Set1 and Set2 have the same elements.
ord_subset/2  Is true if all elements of Sub are in Super.
ord_subtract/3  Diff is the set holding all elements of InOSet that are not in NotInOSet.
ord_symdiff/3  Is true when Difference is the symmetric difference of Set1 and Set2.
ord_union/2  True if Union is the union of all elements in the superset SetOfSets.
ord_union/3  Union is the union of Set1 and Set2.
ord_union/4  True iff ord_union(Set1, Set2, Union) and ord_subtract(Set2, Set1, New).

**F.2.13 predicate_options**

assert_predicate_options/4  As predicate_options(:PI, +Arg, +Options).
check_predicate_option/3  Verify predicate options at runtime.
check_predicate_options/0  Analyse loaded program for erroneous options.
current_option_arg/2  True when Arg of PI processes predicate options.
current_predicate_option/3  True when Arg of PI processes Option.
current_predicate_options/3 True when Options is the current active option declaration for PI on Arg.
derive_predicate_options/0 Derive new predicate option declarations.
derived_predicate_options/1 Derive predicate option declarations for a module.
derived_predicate_options/3 Derive option arguments using static analysis.
predicate_options/3 Declare that the predicate PI processes options on Arg.
retractall_predicate_options/0 Remove all dynamically (derived) predicate options.

F.2.14 prologpack

environment/2 Hook to define the environment for building packs.
pack_info/1 Print more detailed information about Pack.
pack_install/1 Install a package.
pack_install/2 Install package Name.
pack_list/1 Query package server and installed packages and display results.
pack_list_installed/0 List currently installed packages.
pack_property/2 True when Property is a property of Pack.
pack_rebuild/0 Rebuild foreign components of all packages.
pack_rebuild/1 Rebuilt possible foreign components of Pack.
pack_remove/1 Remove the indicated package.
pack_search/1 Query package server and installed packages and display results.
pack_upgrade/1 Try to upgrade the package Pack.

F.2.15 prologxref

prolog:called_by/2 (hook) Extend cross-referencer
xref_built_in/1 Examine defined built-ins
xref_called/3 Examine called predicates
xref_clean/1 Remove analysis of source
xref_current_source/1 Examine cross-referenced sources
xref_defined/3 Examine defined predicates
xref_exported/2 Examine exported predicates
xref_module/2 Module defined by source
xref_source/1 Cross-reference analysis of source

F.2.16 pairs

group_pairs_by_key/2 Group values with the same key.
map_list_to_pairs/3 Create a Key-Value list by mapping each element of List.
pairs_keys/2 Remove the values from a list of Key-Value pairs.
pairs_keys_values/3 True if Keys holds the keys of Pairs and Values the values.
pairs_values/2 Remove the keys from a list of Key-Value pairs.
transpose_pairs/2 Swap Key-Value to Value-Key.
F.2. LIBRARY PREDICATES

F.2.17 pio

pure_input

phrase_from_file/2   Process the content of File using the DCG rule Grammar.
phrase_from_file/3   As phrase_from_file/2, providing additional Options.
stream_to_lazy_list/2 Create a lazy list representing the character codes in Stream.

F.2.18 random

getrand/1            Query/set the state of the random generator.
maybe/0              Succeed/fail with equal probability (variant of maybe/1).
maybe/1              Succeed with probability P, fail with probability 1-P.
maybe/2              Succeed with probability K/N (variant of maybe/1).
random/1             Binds R to a new random float in the _open_ interval (0.0,1.0).
random/3             Generate a random integer or float in a range.
random_between/3     Binds R to a random integer in [L,U] (i.e., including both L and U).
random_member/2      X is a random member of List.
random_perm2/4       Does X=A,Y=B or X=B,Y=A with equal probability.
random_permutation/2 Permutation is a random permutation of List.
random_select/3      Randomly select or insert an element.
randseq/3            S is a list of K unique random integers in the range 1..N.
randset/3            S is a sorted list of K unique random integers in the range 1..N.
setrand/1            Query/set the state of the random generator.

F.2.19 readutil

read_line_to_codes/2 Read line from a stream
read_line_to_codes/3 Read line from a stream
read_stream_to_codes/2 Read contents of stream
read_stream_to_codes/3 Read contents of stream
read_file_to_codes/3  Read contents of file
read_file_to_terms/3  Read contents of file to Prolog terms

F.2.20 record

record/1   Define named fields in a term

F.2.21 registry

This library is only available on Windows systems.

registry_get_key/2   Get principal value of key
registry_get_key/3   Get associated value of key
registry_set_key/2   Set principal value of key
registry_set_key/3   Set associated value of key
registry_delete_key/1 Remove a key
shell_register_file_type/4  Register a file-type
shell_register_dde/6    Register DDE action
shell_register_prolog/1 Register Prolog

F.2.22  ugraphs

vertices_edges_to_ugraph/3  Create unweighted graph
vertices/2                  Find vertices in graph
degrees/2                   Find edges in graph
add_vertices/3              Add vertices to graph
del_vertices/3              Delete vertices from graph
add_edges/3                 Add edges to graph
del_edges/3                 Delete edges from graph
transpose/2                 Invert the direction of all edges
neighbors/3                 Find neighbors of vertice
neighbours/3                Find neighbors of vertice
complement/2                Inverse presence of edges
compose/3                   
top_sort/2                  Sort graph topologically
top_sort/3                  Sort graph topologically
transitive_closure/2        Create transitive closure of graph
reachable/3                 Find all reachable vertices
ugraph_union/3              Union of two graphs

F.2.23  url

file_name_to_url/2  Translate between a filename and a file:/ URL.
global_url/3        Translate a possibly relative URL into an absolute one.
http_location/2     Construct or analyze an HTTP location.
is_absolute_url/1   True if URL is an absolute URL.
parse_url/2         Construct or analyse a URL.
parse_url/3         Similar to parse_url/2 for relative URLs.
parse_url_search/2  Construct or analyze an HTTP search specification.
set_url_encoding/2  Query and set the encoding for URLs.
url_iri/2           Convert between a URL, encoding in US-ASCII and an IRI.
www_form_encode/2   En/decode to/from application/x-www-form-encoded.

F.2.24  www.browser

www_open_url/1  Open a web-page in a browser

F.2.25  clp/clpfd

# / \/2    P and Q hold.
# <=/2     X is less than Y.
F.2. LIBRARY PREDICATES

#<==/2 Q implies P.
#<==>/2 P and Q are equivalent.
#=/2 X equals Y.
#=</2 X is less than or equal to Y.
#==>/2 P implies Q.
#>=/2 X is greater than or equal to Y.
#\1 The reifiable constraint Q does not hold.
#\_/2 P or Q holds.
#\=/2 X is not Y.
all_different/1 Vars are pairwise distinct.
all_distinct/1 Like all_different/1, with stronger propagation.
automaton/3 Constrain variables with a finite automaton.
automaton/8 Constrain variables with a finite automaton.
chain/2 Constrain variables to be a chain with respect to Relation.
circuit/1 True if the list Vs of finite domain variables induces a Hamiltonian circuit.
cumulative/1 Equivalent to cumulative(Tasks, [limit(1)]).
cumulative/2 Tasks is a list of tasks, each of the form task(S_i, D_i, E_i, C_i, T_i).
element/3 The N-th element of the list of finite domain variables Vs is V.
fd_dom/2 Dom is the current domain (see in/2) of Var.
fdsup/2 Inf is the infimum of the current domain of Var.
fdsup/2 Determine the size of a variable’s domain.
fdsup/2 Sup is the supremum of the current domain of Var.
fdsup/2 True iff Var is a CLP(FD) variable.
global_cardinality/2 Global Cardinality constraint.
global_cardinality/3 Global Cardinality constraint.
in/2 Var is an element of Domain.
indomain/1 Bind Var to all feasible values of its domain on backtracking.
ins/2 The variables in the list Vars are elements of Domain.
label/1 Equivalent to labeling([], Vars).
labeling/2 Assign a value to each variable in Vars.
lex_chain/1 Lists are lexicographically non-decreasing.
scalar_product/4 Cs is a list of integers, Vs is a list of variables and integers.
serialized/2 Constrain a set of intervals to a non-overlapping sequence.
sum/3 The sum of elements of the list Vars is in relation Rel to Expr.
transpose/2 Transpose a list of lists of the same length.
tuples_in/2 Relation must be a list of lists of integers.
zcompare/3 Analogous to compare/3, with finite domain variables A and B.

F.2.26 clpqr

entailed/1 Check if constraint is entailed
inf/2 Find the infimum of an expression
sup/2 Find the supremum of an expression
minimize/1 Minimizes an expression
maximize/1 Maximizes an expression
bb_inf/3 Infimum of expression for mixed-integer problems
bb_inf/4 Infimum of expression for mixed-integer problems
bb_inf/5 Infimum of expression for mixed-integer problems
dump/3 Dump constraints on variables

F.2.27 clp/simplex

assignment/2 Solve assignment problem
constraint/3 Add linear constraint to state
constraint/4 Add named linear constraint to state
constraint_add/4 Extend a named constraint
gen_state/1 Create empty linear program
maximize/3 Maximize objective function in to linear constraints
minimize/3 Minimize objective function in to linear constraints
objective/2 Fetch value of objective function
shadow_price/3 Fetch shadow price in solved state
transportation/4 Solve transportation problem
variable_value/3 Fetch value of variable in solved state

F.2.28 thread_pool

current_thread_pool/1 True if Name refers to a defined thread pool.
thread_create_in_pool/4 Create a thread in Pool.
thread_pool_create/3 Create a pool of threads.
thread_pool_destroy/1 Destroy the thread pool named Name.
thread_pool_property/2 True if Property is a property of thread pool Name.

F.2.29 varnumbers

max_var_number/3 True when Max is the max of Start and the highest numbered $VAR(N)$ term.
numbervars/1 Number variables in Term using $VAR(N)$.
varnumbers/2 Inverse of numbervars/1.
varnumbers/3 Inverse of numbervars/3.
F.3 Arithmetic Functions

* / 2 Multiplication
** / 2 Power function
+ / 1 Unary plus (No-op)
+ / 2 Addition
− / 1 Unary minus
− / 2 Subtraction
/ / 2 Division
/ / / 2 Integer division
/ / 2 Bitwise and
<< / 2 Bitwise left shift
>> / 2 Bitwise right shift
/ . / 2 List of one character: character code
\ / 1 Bitwise negation
\ / / 2 Bitwise or
^ / 2 Power function
abs / 1 Absolute value
acos / 1 Inverse (arc) cosine
asin / 1 Inverse (arc) sine
atan / 1 Inverse (arc) tangent
atan / 2 Rectangular to polar conversion
atan2 / 2 Rectangular to polar conversion
ceil / 1 Smallest integer larger than arg
ceiling / 1 Smallest integer larger than arg
cos / 1 Cosine
copysign / 2 Apply sign of N2 to N1
cputime / 0 Get CPU time
div / 2 Integer division
e / 0 Mathematical constant
epsilon / 0 Floating point precision
eval / 1 Evaluate term as expression
exp / 1 Exponent (base e)
float / 1 Explicitly convert to float
float_fractional_part / 1 Fractional part of a float
float_integer_part / 1 Integer part of a float
floor / 1 Largest integer below argument
gcd / 2 Greatest common divisor
integer / 1 Round to nearest integer
log / 1 Natural logarithm
log10 / 1 10 base logarithm
lsb / 1 Least significant bit
max / 2 Maximum of two numbers
min / 2 Minimum of two numbers
msb / 1 Most significant bit
mod / 2 Remainder of division
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>powm/3</td>
<td>Integer exponent and modulo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>random/1</td>
<td>Generate random number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>random_float/0</td>
<td>Generate random number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rational/1</td>
<td>Convert to rational number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rationalize/1</td>
<td>Convert to rational number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rdiv/2</td>
<td>Ration number division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rem/2</td>
<td>Remainder of division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>round/1</td>
<td>Round to nearest integer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>truncate/1</td>
<td>Truncate float to integer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pi/0</td>
<td>Mathematical constant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>popcount/1</td>
<td>Count 1s in a bitvector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sign/1</td>
<td>Extract sign of value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sin/1</td>
<td>Sine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sqrt/1</td>
<td>Square root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tan/1</td>
<td>Tangent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xor/2</td>
<td>Bitwise exclusive or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## F.4 Operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>§</code></td>
<td>Bind top-level variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>^</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>mod</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>*</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>/</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>&lt;&lt;</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>&gt;&gt;</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>xor</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>+</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>-</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>\</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>/</code></td>
<td>Arithmetic function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>:</code></td>
<td>module:term separator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>&lt;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>=</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>==</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>@=</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>\=</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>&gt;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>@&lt;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>@=&lt;</code></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>is</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>\=</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>\==</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>@=</code></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>\+</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>,</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>-&gt;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>*-&gt;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
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<td><code>;</code></td>
<td>Predicate</td>
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<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>`</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predicate</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>discontiguous</td>
<td>Introduces a directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dynamic</td>
<td>Introduces a directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>module_transparent</td>
<td>DCGrammar: rewrite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meta_predicate</td>
<td>Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multifile</td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thread_local</td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volatile</td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initialization</td>
<td>Predicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:-</td>
<td>head :- body, separator</td>
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Bibliography


