

Navigation and Ancillary Information Facility

Exception Handling

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Topics

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Exceptions Are... - 1

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- **Run time error conditions**
 - **Files**
 - » Required files not loaded.
 - » Gaps in data.
 - » Corrupted or malformed files (e.g. ftp'd in wrong mode).
 - **Invalid subroutine/function arguments**
 - » String values unrecognized.
 - » Numeric values out of range.
 - » Data type/dimension mismatch.
 - **Arithmetic errors**
 - » Divide by zero, square root of a negative number.
 - **Environment problems**
 - » Insufficient disk space for output files.
 - » Lack of required read/write permission/privileges.



Exceptions Are... - 2

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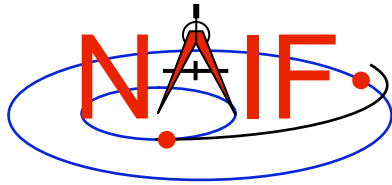
- **Valid but unusual conditions**
 - Examples are:
 - » Normalize the zero vector.
 - » Find the rotation axis of the identity matrix.
 - » Find the boresight intercept lat/lon for a non-intercept case.
 - » Find a substring where the end index precedes the start index.
 - Such cases are normally not SPICE “Error Conditions”
 - Typically must be handled by a logical branch
- **Errors found by analysis tools, such as parsers**
 - Examples are:
 - » Invalid SQL query.
 - » Invalid string representing number (borderline case).
 - Such cases are normally not SPICE “Error Conditions”
 - However, if a SPICE parsing routine failed because it couldn’t open a scratch file, THAT would be an “error condition.”



Language Dependencies

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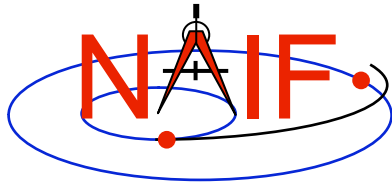
- **SPICELIB and CSPICE provide essentially identical error handling capabilities.**
- **Icy and Mice provide similar error handling functionality; this functionality is quite different from that of CSPICE.**
 - These systems do rely on CSPICE for most error detection.
 - Icy and Mice provide no API for customizing underlying CSPICE error handling behavior.
 - Short, long, and traceback error messages are merged into a single, parsable, message.
 - Use IDL or MATLAB features to customize error handling...
 - » to prevent your program from stopping
 - » to capture SPICE error messages
- **Most of this tutorial deals with SPICELIB and CSPICE error handling.**
 - There is a bit on Icy and Mice near the end.



Fortran and C Error Handling Features - 1

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- **Error handling in SPICE: safety first**
 - Trap errors where they occur; don't let them propagate
 - » Don't let errors "fall through" to the operating system.
 - Supply meaningful diagnostic messages
 - » Incorporate relevant run-time data.
 - » Supply context in human-readable form.
 - Don't depend on callers to handle errors
 - » Normally, "error flags" are not returned to callers.
 - Stop unless told not to
 - » Don't try to continue by making "smart guesses."
- **Subroutine interface for error handling**
 - Interface routines called within SPICE may be called by users' application programs



Fortran and C Error Handling Features - 2

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- **Signal errors**
 - Create descriptive messages when and where an error is detected
 - » Short message, long message, (explanation), traceback
 - “Signal” the error: set error status, output messages
 - » By default, CSPICE error output goes to stdout (not stderr)
- **Retrieve error information**
 - Get status and error messages via subroutine calls
- **Customize error response---actions taken when an error occurs.**
 - Set error handling mode (“action”)
 - Set error output device
 - Set message selection
- **Inhibit tracing**
 - To improve run-time performance (only for thoroughly debugged code)



Error Messages

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- **Short message**
 - Up to 25 characters.
 - Can easily be compared with expected value.
 - » Example: `SPICE(FILEOPENFAILED)`.
- **Long message**
 - Up to 1840 characters.
 - Can contain values supplied at run time.
 - » Example: 'The file <sat077.bsp> was not found.'
- **Traceback**
 - Shows call tree above routine where error was signaled.
 - » Not dependent on system tracing capability.
 - » Don't need a "crash" to obtain a traceback.



Error Handling Actions - 1

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- **ABORT**

- Designed for safety.
 - » Output messages and traceback to your screen or stdout.
 - » Stop program; return status code if possible.

- **RETURN**

- For use in programs that must keep running.
- Attempts to return control to the calling application.
- Preserves error information so calling application can respond.
 - » Output messages to current error device.
 - » Set error status to “true”: `FAILED()` will return “true.”
 - » Set “return” status to “true”: `RETURN()` will return “true.”
 - » Most SPICE routines will return on entry. Very simple routines will generally execute anyway.

--continues--



Error Handling Actions - 2

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- » **Capture traceback at point where error was signaled.**
- » **Inhibit error message writing and error signaling.**
- » **Must call RESET to resume normal error handling.**



Error Device

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- **Destination of error messages**
 - Screen/stdout (default)
 - Designated file
 - » Error diagnostics are appended to the file as errors are encountered.
 - “NULL” --- suppress output
 - » When the NULL device is specified, error messages can still be retrieved using API calls.
- **Limitations**
 - In C, cannot send messages to stderr.
 - In C, writing to a file opened by means other than calling `errdev_c` is possible only if CSPIICE routines were used to open the file.
 - » These limitations may be removed in a later version of CSPIICE.



Customize Error Handling - 1

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- **Set error action**
 - **CALL ERRACT ('SET', 'RETURN')**
 - **erract_c ("set", LEN, "return");**
 - » Length argument is ignored when action is "set"; when action is "get", LEN should be set to the available room in the output string, for example:
 - » **erract_c ("get", ACTLEN, action);**
- **Set error device**
 - **CALL ERRDEV ('SET', 'errlog.txt')**
 - **errdev_c ("set", LEN, "errlog.txt");**
- **Select error messages**
 - **CALL ERRPRT ('SET', 'NONE, SHORT, TRACEBACK')**
 - » If tracing is disabled, selecting TRACEBACK has no effect.
 - **errprt_c ("set", LEN, "none, short, traceback");**



Customize Error Handling - 2

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- **Disable tracing**
 - Normally done to speed up execution
 - Benefit is highly dependent on application
 - Speed-up has been a few percent to roughly 30%
 - » High end estimate based on older, slower tracing implementation.
 - Use TRCOFF:
 - » **CALL TRCOFF or trcoff_c();**
 - Do this at the beginning of your program.
 - Once disabled you cannot re-enable tracing during a program run.



Get Error Status - 1

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- **Use FAILED to determine whether an error has been signaled**
 - `IF (FAILED()) THEN ...`
 - `if (failed_c()) { ...`
- **Use FAILED after calling one or more SPICE routines in a sequence**
 - Normally, it's safe to call a series of SPICE routines without testing FAILED after each call
- **Use GETMSG to retrieve short or long error messages**
 - `CALL GETMSG ('SHORT', SMSG)`
 - `getmsg_c ("short", LEN, smsg);`



Get Error Status - 2

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- **Use QCKTRC or TRCDEP and TRCNAM to retrieve traceback message**
 - In CSPICE, only f2c'd versions of these routines are available
- **Test value of RETURN() to determine whether routines should return on entry**
 - Only relevant if user code is designed to support RETURN mode
- **Handle error condition, then reset error status:**
 - `CALL RESET`
 - `reset_c()` ;
 - In Icy-based applications you only handle error condition; a reset is automatically performed by Icy



Signal Errors - 1

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- **Create long error message**
 - Up to 1840 characters
 - Use SETMSG

```
» CALL SETMSG ( 'File <#> was not found.' )
» setmsg_c    ( "File <#> was not found." );
```
- **Substitute string, integer, or d.p values at run time**
 - Use ERRCH

```
» CALL ERRCH ( '#', 'cassini.bsp' )
» errch_c    ( "#", "cassini.bsp" );
```
 - Also can use ERRINT, ERRDP
 - In Fortran, can refer to files by logical unit numbers: ERRFNM



Signal Errors - 2

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- **Signal error**
 - Use SIGERR to signal error. Supply short error message as input to SIGERR.
 - » `CALL SIGERR ('FILE OPEN FAILED')`
 - » `sigerr_c ("FILE OPEN FAILED");`
 - “Signaling” error causes SPICE error response to occur
 - » Output messages, if enabled
 - » Set error status
 - » Set return status, if error action is RETURN
 - » Inhibit further error signaling if in RETURN mode
 - » Stop program if in abort mode
- **Reset error status after handling error**
 - `CALL RESET()`
 - `reset_c()`



Icy Error Handling

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- **Error action:**
 - By default, a SPICE error signal stops execution of IDL scripts; a SPICE error message is displayed; control returns to the execution level (normally the command prompt).
 - Icy sets the CSPICE shared object library's error handling system to RETURN mode. No other modes are used.
 - » The CSPICE error state is reset after detecting an error.
 - Use the IDL CATCH feature to respond to error condition.
- **Error status**
 - Value of !error_state.name
 - » ICY_M_BAD_IDL_ARGS - indicates invalid argument list.
 - » ICY_M_SPICE_ERROR - indicates occurrence of a SPICE error.
- **Error message**
 - CSPICE short, long, and traceback error messages are merged into a single, parsable, message.
 - » The merged error message is contained in the variable !error_state.msg.
 - » **Example:**

```
CSPICE_ET2UTC: SPICE(MISSINGTIMEINFO): [et2utc->ET2UTC->UNITIM]
The following, needed to convert between the
uniform time scales, could not be found in the
kernel pool: DELTET/DELTA_T_A, DELTET/K,
DELTET/EB, DELTET/M. Your program may have failed to load...
```



Mice Error Handling

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- **Error action:**
 - By default, a SPICE error signal stops execution of MATLAB scripts; a SPICE error message is displayed; control returns to the execution level.
 - Mice sets the CSPICE shared object library's error handling system to RETURN mode. No other modes are used.
 - » The CSPICE error state is reset after detecting an error.
 - Use the MATLAB try/catch construct to respond to error condition.
- **Error message**
 - CSPICE short, long, and traceback error messages are merged into a single, parsable, message.
 - » **Example:**

```
??? SPICE(MISSINGTIMEINFO): [et2utc->ET2UTC->UNITIM]
The following, needed to convert between the
uniform time scales, could not be found in the
kernel pool: DELTET/DELTA_T_A, DELTET/K,
DELTET/EB, DELTET/M. Your program may have failed to load..
```
- **Use the MATLAB function lasterror to retrieve SPICE error diagnostics. When a SPICE error occurs:**
 - the “message” field of the structure returned by lasterror contains the SPICE error message.
 - the “stack” field of this structure refers to the location in the m-file from which the Mice wrapper was called (and so is generally not useful).
 - the “identifier” field of this structure currently is not set.



Recommendations

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- **For easier problem solving**
 - Leave tracing enabled when debugging.
 - Always test FAILED after a sequence of one or more consecutive calls to SPICE routines.
 - Don't throw away error output. It may be the only useful clue as to what's going wrong.
 - » Programs that must suppress SPICE error output should trap it and provide a means for retrieving it.
 - Test FAILED to see whether an error occurred.
 - Use GETMSG to retrieve error messages
 - Use RESET to clear the error condition
 - Use SPICE error handling in your own code where appropriate.
 - When reporting errors to NAIF, have SPICE error message output available
 - » Note whether error output is actually from SPICE routines, from non-SPICE code, or was generated at the system level.