

Perl Regular Expression Quick Reference Card

Revision 0.1 (draft) for Perl 5.8.5

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This is a quick reference to Perl's regular expressions. For full information see the *perlre* and *perlop* manual pages.

Operators

`=~` determines to which variable the regex is applied. In its absence, `$_` is used.

```
$var =~ /foo/;
```

`!~` determines to which variable the regex is applied, and negates the result of the match; it returns false if the match succeeds, and true if it fails.

```
$var !~ /foo/;
```

`m/pattern/igmsoxc`

searches a string for a pattern match, applying the given options.

- i case-insensitive
- g global – all occurrences
- m multiline mode – `^` and `$` match internal lines
- s match as a single line – `.` matches `\n`
- o compile pattern once
- x extended legibility – free whitespace and comments
- c don't reset pos on failed matches when using `/g`

If *pattern* is an empty string, the last successfully matched regex is used. Delimiters other than `'/'` may be used for both this operator and the following ones.

`qr/pattern/imsox`

lets you store a regex in a variable, or pass one around. Modifiers as for `m//` and are stored within the regex.

`s/pattern/replacement/igmsoxe`

substitutes matches of *pattern* with *replacement*. Modifiers as for `m//` with one addition:

e evaluate replacement as an expression

'e' may be specified multiple times. *replacement* is interpreted as a double quoted string unless a single-quote (`'`) is the delimiter.

`?pattern?`

is like `m/pattern/` but matches only once. No alternate delimiters can be used. Must be reset with `reset`.

Syntax

<code>\</code>	Escapes the character immediately following it
<code>.</code>	Matches any single character except a newline (unless <code>/s</code> is used)
<code>^</code>	Matches at the beginning of the string (or line, if <code>/m</code> is used)
<code>\$</code>	Matches at the end of the string (or line, if <code>/m</code> is used)
<code>*</code>	Matches the preceding element 0 or more times
<code>+</code>	Matches the preceding element 1 or more times
<code>?</code>	Matches the preceding element 0 or 1 times
<code>{...}</code>	Specifies a range of occurrences for the element preceding it
<code>[...]</code>	Matches any one of the characters contained within the brackets
<code>(...)</code>	Groups subexpressions for capturing to <code>\$1</code> , <code>\$2</code> ...
<code>(?:...)</code>	Groups subexpressions without capturing (cluster)
<code> </code>	Matches either the subexpression preceding or following it
<code>\1, \2 ...</code>	The text from the Nth group

Escape sequences

These work as in normal strings.

<code>\a</code>	Alarm (beep)
<code>\e</code>	Escape
<code>\f</code>	Formfeed
<code>\n</code>	Newline
<code>\r</code>	Carriage return
<code>\t</code>	Tab
<code>\038</code>	Any octal ASCII value
<code>\x7f</code>	Any hexadecimal ASCII value
<code>\x{263a}</code>	A wide hexadecimal value
<code>\cx</code>	Control-x
<code>\N{name}</code>	A named character
<code>\l</code>	Lowercase next character
<code>\u</code>	Titlecase next character
<code>\L</code>	Lowercase until <code>\E</code>
<code>\U</code>	Uppercase until <code>\E</code>
<code>\Q</code>	Disable pattern metacharacters until <code>\E</code>
<code>\E</code>	End case modification

This one works differently from normal strings:

<code>\b</code>	An assertion, not backspace, except in a character class
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Character classes

<code>[amy]</code>	Match 'a', 'm' or 'y'
<code>[f-j]</code>	Dash specifies <i>range</i>
<code>[f-j-]</code>	Dash escaped or at start or end means 'dash'
<code>[^f-j]</code>	Caret indicates "match any character <i>except</i> these"

The following sequences work within or without a character class. The first six are locale aware, all are Unicode aware. The default character class equivalent are given. See the `perllocale` and `perlunicode` man pages for details.

<code>\d</code>	A digit	<code>[0-9]</code>
<code>\D</code>	A nondigit	<code>[^0-9]</code>
<code>\w</code>	A word character	<code>[a-zA-Z0-9_]</code>
<code>\W</code>	A non-word character	<code>[^a-zA-Z0-9_]</code>
<code>\s</code>	A whitespace character	<code>[\t\n\r\f]</code>
<code>\S</code>	A non-whitespace character	<code>[^\t\n\r\f]</code>
<code>\C</code>	Match a byte (with Unicode, ‘.’ matches a character)	
<code>\pP</code>	Match P-named (Unicode) property	
<code>\p{...}</code>	Match Unicode property with long name	
<code>\PP</code>	Match non-P	
<code>\P{...}</code>	Match lack of Unicode property with long name	
<code>\X</code>	Match extended unicode sequence	

POSIX character classes and their Unicode and Perl equivalents:

<code>alnum</code>	<code>IsAlnum</code>	Alphanumeric	
<code>alpha</code>	<code>IsAlpha</code>	Alphabetic	
<code>ascii</code>	<code>IsASCII</code>	Any ASCII char	
<code>blank</code>	<code>IsSpace</code>	Horizontal whitespace (GNU extension)	<code>[\t]</code>
<code>cntrl</code>	<code>IsCntrl</code>	Control characters	
<code>digit</code>	<code>IsDigit</code>	Digits	<code>\d</code>
<code>graph</code>	<code>IsGraph</code>	Alphanumeric and punctuation	
<code>lower</code>	<code>IsLower</code>	Lowercase chars (locale and Unicode aware)	
<code>print</code>	<code>IsPrint</code>	Alphanumeric, punct, and space	
<code>punct</code>	<code>IsPunct</code>	Punctuation	
<code>space</code>	<code>IsSpace</code>	Whitespace	<code>[\s\ck]</code>
	<code>IsSpacePerl</code>	Perl’s whitespace definition	<code>\s</code>
<code>upper</code>	<code>IsUpper</code>	Uppercase chars (locale and Unicode aware)	
<code>word</code>	<code>IsWord</code>	Alphanumeric plus <code>_</code> (Perl extension)	<code>\w</code>
<code>xdigit</code>	<code>IsXDigit</code>	Hexadecimal digit	<code>[0-9A-Fa-f]</code>

Within a character class:

POSIX	traditional	Unicode
<code>[:digit:]</code>	<code>\d</code>	<code>\p{IsDigit}</code>
<code>[:^digit:]</code>	<code>\D</code>	<code>\P{IsDigit}</code>

anchors

All are zero-width assertions.

<code>^</code>	Match string start (or line, if <code>/m</code> is used)
<code>\$</code>	Match string end (or line, if <code>/m</code> is used) or before newline
<code>\b</code>	Match word boundary (between <code>\w</code> and <code>\W</code>)
<code>\B</code>	Match except at word boundary (between <code>\w</code> and <code>\w</code> or <code>\W</code> and <code>\W</code>)
<code>\A</code>	Match string start (regardless of <code>/m</code>)
<code>\Z</code>	Match string end (before optional newline)
<code>\z</code>	Match absolute string end
<code>\G</code>	Match where previous <code>m//g</code> left off

Quantifiers

Quantifiers are greedy by default – match the **longest** leftmost.

Maximal	Minimal	Allowed range
<code>{n,m}</code>	<code>{n,m}?</code>	Must occur at least n times but no more than m times
<code>{n,}</code>	<code>{n,}?</code>	Must occur at least n times
<code>{n}</code>	<code>{n}?</code>	Must occur exactly n times
<code>*</code>	<code>*?</code>	0 or more times (same as <code>{0,}</code>)
<code>+</code>	<code>+</code>	1 or more times (same as <code>{1,}</code>)
<code>?</code>	<code>??</code>	0 or 1 time (same as <code>{0,1}</code>)

There is no quantifier `{,n}` – that gets understood as a literal string.

Extended constructs

<code>(?#text)</code>	A comment
<code>(?imxs-imsx:...)</code>	Enable/disable option (as per <code>m//</code> modifiers)
<code>(?=...)</code>	Zero-width positive lookahead assertion
<code>(?!...)</code>	Zero-width negative lookahead assertion
<code>(?<=...)</code>	Zero-width positive lookbehind assertion
<code>(?<!...)</code>	Zero-width negative lookbehind assertion
<code>(?>...)</code>	Grab what we can, prohibit backtracking
<code>(?{ code })</code>	Embedded code, return value becomes <code>\$^R</code>
<code>(??{ code })</code>	Dynamic regex, return value used as regex
<code>(?(cond)yes no)</code>	cond being integer corresponding to capturing parens
<code>(?(cond)yes)</code>	or a lookaround/eval zero-width assertion

Variables

<code>\$_</code>	Default variable for operators to use
<code>\$*</code>	Enable multiline matching (deprecated; not in 5.9.0 or later)
<code>\$&</code>	Entire matched string
<code>\$'</code>	Everything prior to matched string
<code>\$'</code>	Everything after to matched string

The use of those last three will slow down **all** regex use within your program. Consult the *perlvar* man page for `@LAST_MATCH_START` to see equivalent expressions that won't cause slow down. See also `Devel::SawAmpersand`.

<code>\$1, \$2 ...</code>	Hold the Xth captured expr
<code>\$+</code>	Last parenthesized pattern match
<code>\$^N</code>	Holds the most recently closed capture
<code>\$^R</code>	Holds the result of the last <code>(?{...})</code> expr
<code>@-</code>	Offsets of starts of groups. <code>\$-[0]</code> holds start of whole match
<code>@+</code>	Offsets of ends of groups. <code>\$+[0]</code> holds end of whole match

Captured groups are numbered according to their *opening* paren.

Functions

`lc` Lowercase a string
`lcfirst` Lowercase first char of a string
`uc` Uppercase a string
`ucfirst` Titlecase first char of a string
`pos` Return or set current match position
`quotemeta` Quote metacharacters
`reset` Reset *?pattern?* status
`study` Analyze string for optimizing matching
`split` Use regex to split a string into parts
The first four of these are like the escape sequences `\L`, `\l`, `\U`, and `\u`. For Titlecase, see below.

Terminology

Titlecase

Unicode concept which most often is equal to uppercase, but for certain characters like the German ‘sharp s’ (ß) there is a difference.

See also

- *perlretut* for a tutorial on regular expressions.
- *perlrequick* for a rapid tutorial.
- *perlre* for more details.
- *perlvar* for details on the variables.
- *perlop* for details on the operators.
- *perlfunc* for details on the functions.
- *perlfaq6* for FAQs on regular expressions.
- The `remodule` to alter behaviour and aid debugging.
- “Debugging regular expressions” in *perldebug*
- *perluniintro*, *perlunicode*, *chardnames* and *locale* for details on regexes and internationalisation.
- *Mastering Regular Expressions* by Jeffrey Friedl (<http://regex.info/>) for a thorough grounding and reference on the topic.

Authors

This card was created by Andrew Ford.

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