

# Perl Best Practices

## Reference Guide

### Code Layout

1. Brace and parenthesize in RAR style.
2. Separate your control keywords from the following opening bracket.
3. Don't separate subroutines or variable names from the following opening bracket.
4. Don't use unnecessary parentheses for routine and temporary handles.
5. Separate complex keys or indices from their surrounding brackets.
6. Use whitespace to help binary operators stand out from their operands.
7. Place a semicolon after every statement.
8. Place a comma after every value in a multiline list.
9. Use 78-column lines.
10. Use four-column indentation levels.
11. Indent with spaces, not tabs.
12. Never place two statements on the same line.
13. Code in paragraphs.
14. Don't clobber an `else`.
15. Align corresponding items vertically.
16. Break long expressions before an operator.
17. Factor out long expressions in the middle of statements.
18. Always break a long expression at the opening of the lowest possible precedence.
19. Break long assignments before the assignment operator.
20. Format cascaded ternary operators in columns.
21. Parenthesize long lists.
22. Enforce your chosen layout style mechanically.

### Naming Conventions

23. Use grammatical templates when naming identifiers.
24. Name handles after their associated box.
25. Mark variables that store references with a `_ref` suffix.
26. Name arrays in the plural and handles in the singular.
27. Use underscores to separate words in multimed identifiers.
28. Distinguish different program components by case.
29. Note down the prefix.
30. Abbreviate only when the meaning remains unambiguous.
31. Avoid using referentially ambiguous words in names.
32. Prefix for internal use only subroutines with an underscore.

### Values and Expressions

33. Use interpolating string delimiters only for strings that actually interpolate.
34. Don't use `""` or `''` for an empty string.
35. Don't write one-character strings in visually ambiguous ways.
36. Use named character escapes instead of numeric escapes.
37. Use named constants, but don't use `constant`.
38. Don't pad decimal numbers with leading zeros.

39. Use underscores to improve the readability of long numbers.
40. Lay out multiline strings over multiple lines.
41. Use a heredoc when a multiline string exceeds two lines.
42. Use a `delimiter` when a heredoc would compromise your indentation.
43. Make every heredoc terminate a single uppercase identifier with a standard prefix.
44. When introducing a heredoc, quote the terminator.
45. Don't use backslashes.
46. Reserve `or` for pairs.
47. Don't use commas to sequence statements.
48. Don't mix high- and low-prioridade handles.
49. Parenthesize every `or` list.
50. Use table-lookup to test for membership in lists of strings, not `any()` for membership of lists of anything else.

### Variables

51. Avoid using mathematical variables.
52. Don't use package variables in your own development.
53. If you're forced to modify a package variable, *localize* it.
54. Initialize any variable you *localize*.
55. *use English* for the few familiar punctuation variables.
56. If you're forced to modify a punctuation variable, *localize* it.
57. Don't use the same magic variables.
58. Beware of any modification via `$_`.
59. Use negative indices when counting from the end of an array.
60. Take advantage of both and some slicing.
61. Use a tabular layout for slices.
62. Factor large key or index lists out of their slices.

### Control Structures

63. Use block `if`, not prefix `if`.
64. Reserve prefix `if` for flow-of-control statements.
65. Don't use prefix `unless`, `for`, `while`, or `until`.
66. Don't use `unless` or `until` at all.
67. Avoid C-style `for` statements.
68. Avoid subscripting arrays or hashes within loops.
69. Never subscript more than once in a loop.
70. Use named literals as explicit `for` loop iterators.
71. Always declare a `for` loop iterator variable with `my`.
72. Use `map` instead of `for` when generating new lists from old.
73. Use `grep` and `first` instead of `for` when searching for values in a list.
74. Use `for` instead of `map` when transforming a list in place.
75. Use a subroutine call to factor out complex list transformations.
76. Never modify `$_` in a list function.
77. Avoid cascading `if`.
78. Use table-lookup in preference to cascaded equality tests.
79. When producing a value, use tabular constructs.
80. Don't use `do...while` loops.
81. Repeat as many iterations as possible, as early as possible.
82. Don't control loop structures just to concatenate control.
83. Use `for` and `redo` instead of an irregularly created `while`.
84. Label every loop that is exited explicitly, and use the label with `every next, last, or redo`.

### Documentation

85. Distinguish user documentation from technical documentation.
86. Create standard POD templates for modules and applications.
87. Extend and customize your standard POD templates.
88. Put user documentation in source files.
89. Keep all user documentation in a single place within your source file.
90. Place POD as close as possible to the end of the file.
91. Subdivide your technical documentation appropriately.
92. Use block comments for major comments.
93. Use full-line comments to explain the algorithm.
94. Use end-of-line comments to point out subtleties and address.
95. Comment anything that has puzzled or misled you.
96. Consider whether it's better to write than to comment.
97. Use `ivariable` POD sections for longer technical discussions.
98. Check the spelling, syntax, and sanity of your documentation.

### Built-in Functions

99. Don't recompute sort keys inside a `sort`.
100. Use `reverse` to reverse a list.
101. Use scalar `reverse` to reverse a scalar.
102. Use `unpack` to extract fixed-width fields.
103. Use `split` to extract simple variable-width fields.
104. Use `unpack -array _all` to extract complex variable-width fields.
105. Avoid string `eval`.
106. Consider building your sorting routines with `sort <block>`.
107. Use `long <sublist>` instead of `index <sublist>`.
108. Make appropriate use of brace values.
109. Use `glob`, not `q *`.
110. Avoid a raw `select` for non-integer sleeps.
111. Always use a block with a `map` and `grep`.
112. Use the `from-handle handle`.

### Subroutines

113. Call subroutines with parentheses but without a leading `&`.
114. Don't give subroutines the same names as built-in functions.
115. Always inspect `$_` first.
116. Use a block of nested arguments for any subroutine that has more than three parameters.
117. Use `definedness` or `existence` tests for missing arguments.
118. Resolve any default argument values as soon as `$_` is inspected.
119. Always return scalar in scalar returns.
120. Make list-returning subroutines return the `undefined` value in scalar context.
121. When there is no `defined` scalar context return value, consider `undef` or `chomp` instead.
122. Don't use subroutine prototypes.
123. Always return via an explicit `return`.
124. Use a bare `return` to return failure.

### IO

125. Don't use `foreach` filehandles.
126. Use indirect filehandles.
127. If you have to use a package filehandle, *localize* it first.

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