

Debugging in Visual Studio

Learn how to use the powerful integrated debugging environment provided in Visual Studio 2003 and 2005

By Steve Jones
Game Institute



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

What we will cover

- Debugging native, 32-bit console and win32 applications
- Learn most common debugging tools

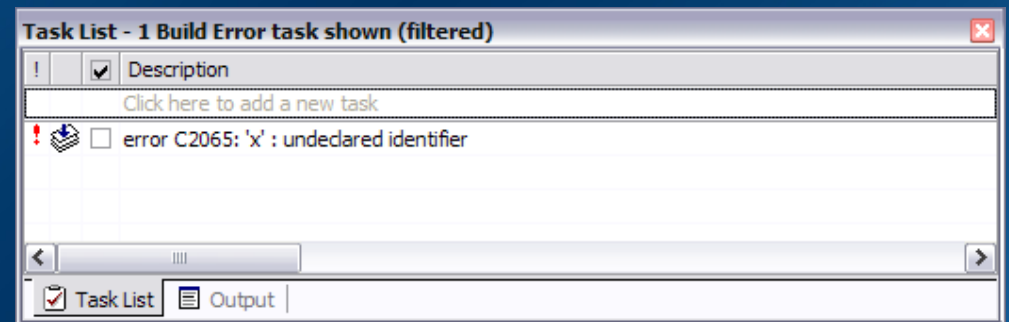
- Visual Studio .NET 2003 and 2005 IDE environments
- The most common techniques for debugging
- Examples



Debugging

What are you trying to find and fix?

- Two main types of code errors
 - Syntax
 - Compiler catches most if not all of these for you.
 - Semantic or logical
 - Syntactically correct yet program may “crash and burn” at run-time!



For example: Compiler will not catch an un-initialized pointer but you WILL get a run-time error if you try to use it!



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Why Should I Use Visual Studio to Debug my Program?

- Even most experienced coder creates errors or “bugs”
- Visual Studio debugger will provide two powerful run-time facilities:
 - Trace the program **Execution**
 - **Watch** variables during program execution
- These allow you to stop at procedure locations, inspect memory and register values, change variables, observe message traffic, and get a close look at what your code does.



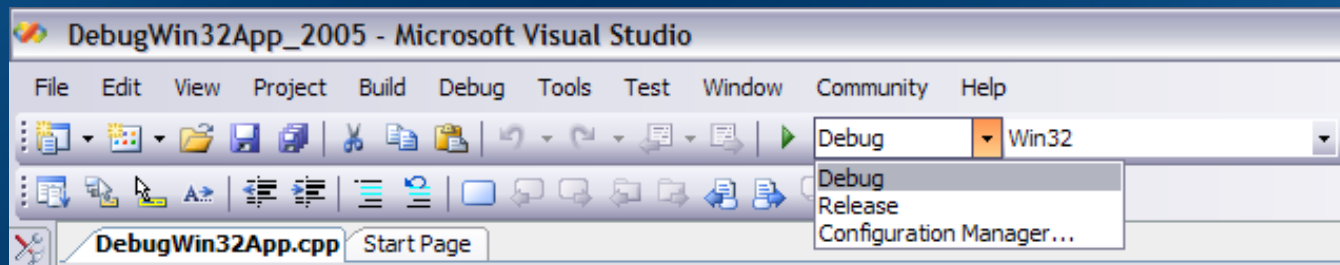
Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Project Configuration Settings

- Debug vs. Release Configurations
 - The **Debug** configuration of your program is compiled with full symbolic debug information and no optimization.
 - The **Release** configuration of your program is fully optimized and contains no symbolic debug information.
 - Must be in Debug configuration to debug your program.



Getting Acquainted with Visual Studio Debugger

- Debugger Windows
 - Autos
 - Locals
 - Watch
 - Call Stack
 - Command Window
 - QuickWatch Dialog
 - Breakpoints window
 - Threads
 - Modules
 - Processes
 - Memory
 - Disassembly
 - Registers
- Execution Control
 - Starting or Continuing Execution
 - Stopping
 - Breaking Execution
 - Stepping Into and Out of code
 - Jumping to another location



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

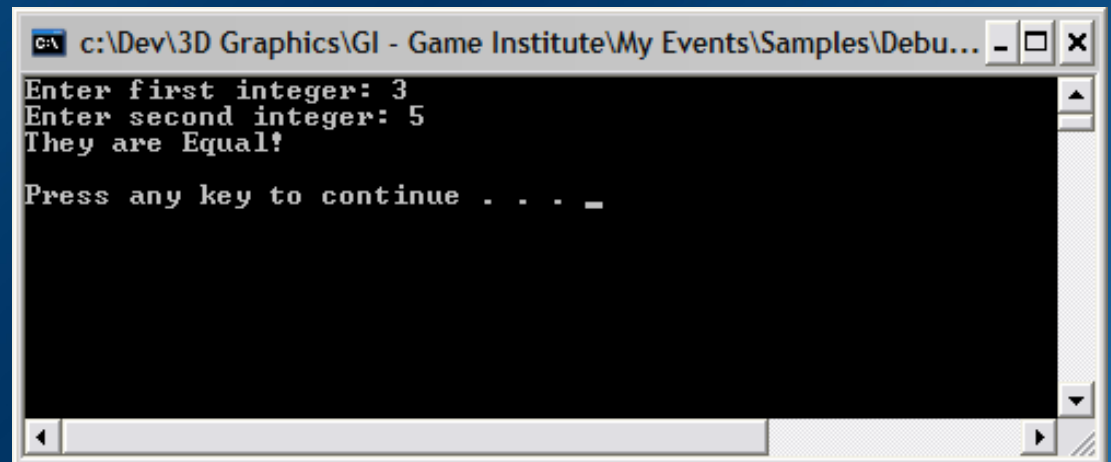
Debugging Example #1

Console app

This simple console program should determine whether two integers are equal.

Code compiled just fine,
0 warnings, 0 errors

... BUT the code obviously has a
logical error! 3 does not equal 5!



```
c:\Dev\3D Graphics\GI - Game Institute\My Events\Samples\Debu...
Enter first integer: 3
Enter second integer: 5
They are Equal?

Press any key to continue . . . . _
```



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Debugging Example #1 (a console app.)

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Visual C++ IDE with the following components:

- Window Title:** DebugConsoleApp - Microsoft Visual C++ [design] - DebugConsoleApp.cpp
- Menu Bar:** File, Edit, View, Project, Build, Debug, Tools, Window, Help
- Toolbox:** Includes icons for file operations and development tools.
- Solution Explorer:** Shows a solution named 'DebugConsoleApp' with a project of the same name. The project contains 'References', 'Source Files' (DebugConsoleApp.cpp), 'Header Files', and 'Resource Files'.
- Code Editor:** Displays the source code for DebugConsoleApp.cpp. The code is as follows:

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----

int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;


    if (x = y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;

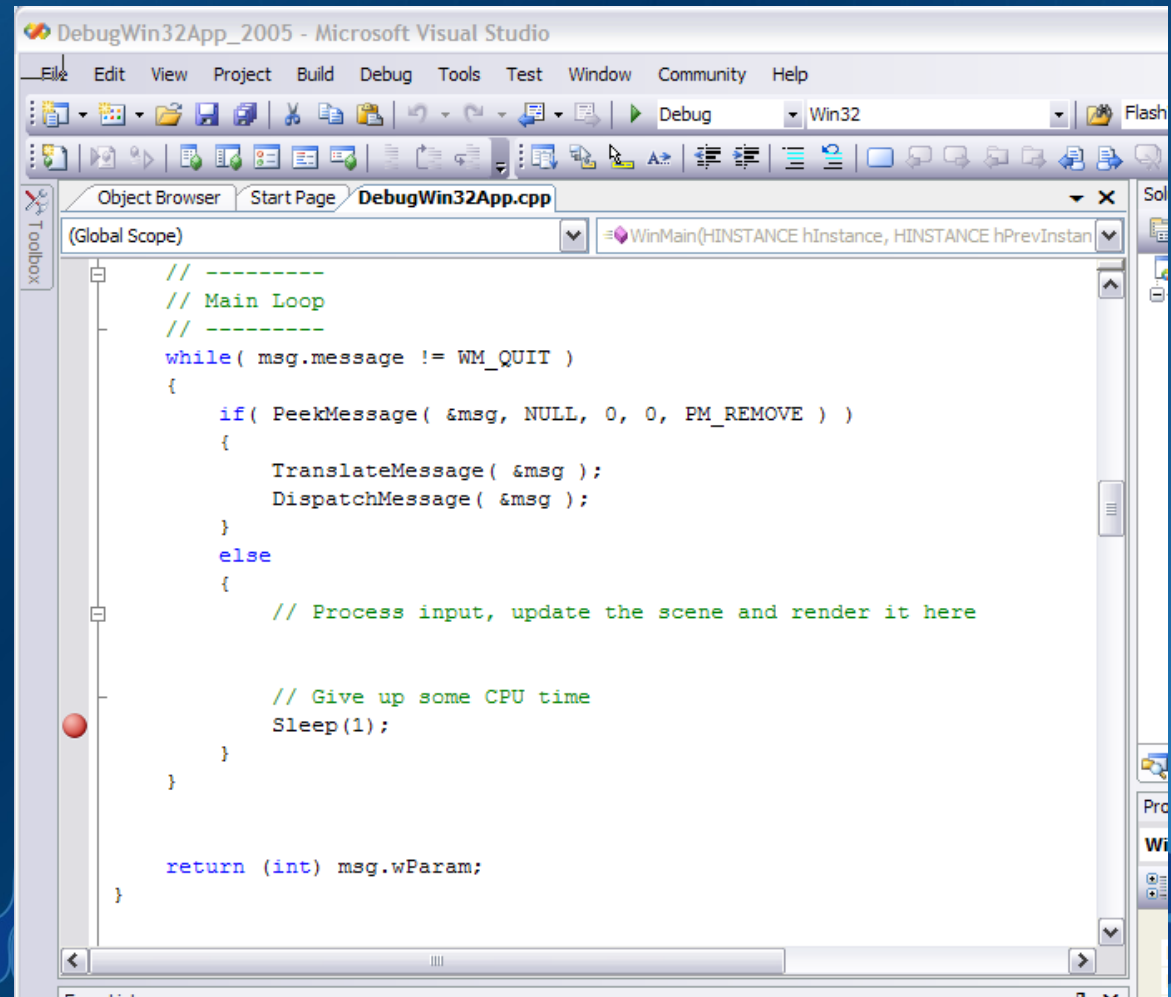
    cout <<endl;

    system("pause");

    return 0;
}
```
- Output Window:** Shows the 'Build' output, which is currently empty.
- Status Bar:** Displays 'Item(s) Saved', 'Ln 1', 'Col 23', 'Ch 23', and 'INS'.

What is a Breakpoint?

- Breakpoints are user-defined code locations that pause execution
 - You know them by the little, red “dot” in the left margin of the editor window
 - F9 to add or remove (toggle)
 - Or left-mouse click in margin
- 
- Unlimited number of them to use.



Debugging Example #1 (continued)

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Visual C++ IDE with the following components:

- Solution Explorer:** Shows a project named 'DebugConsoleApp' with subfolders for References, Source Files, Header Files, and Resource Files. The source file 'DebugConsoleApp.cpp' is selected.
- Code Editor:** Displays the source code of 'DebugConsoleApp.cpp'. A red dot (breakpoint) is placed on the left margin of line 19, which is the first line of the 'if' statement: `if (x = y)`. A green arrow points from the text 'Add a breakpoint here' to this red dot.
- Text Annotations:** Red text reads: 'Add a breakpoint here' and 'We arbitrarily picked this line because it seemed like a reasonable place'.
- Code:**

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----

int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;


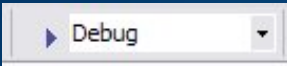
    if (x = y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;

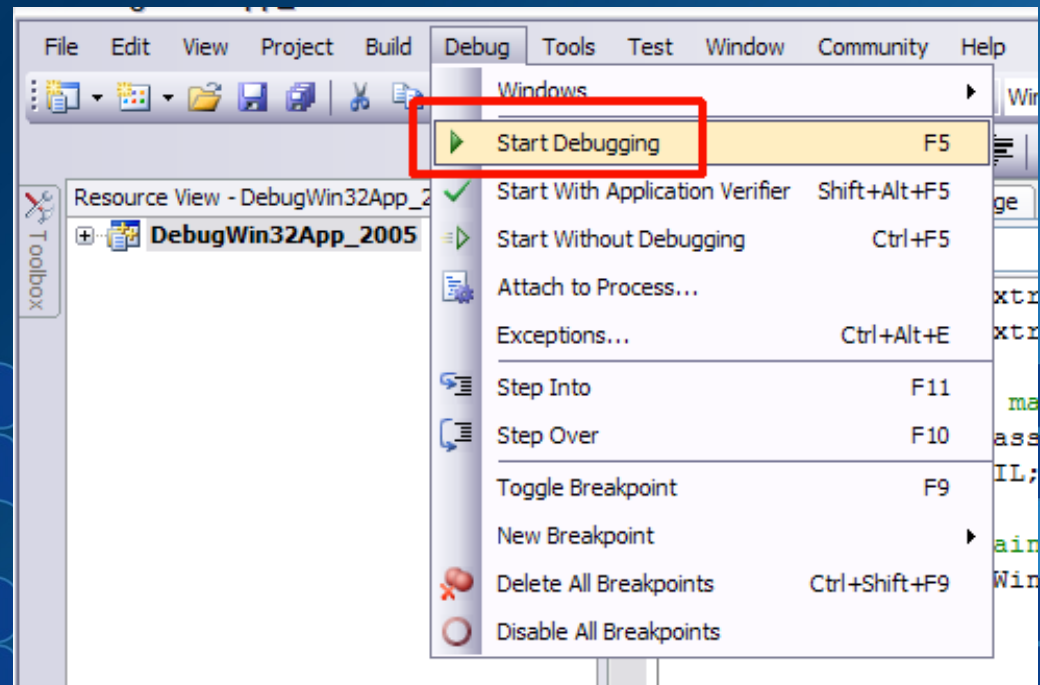
    cout << endl;

    system("pause");

    return 0;
}
```
- Output Window:** Shows the 'Build' output, which is currently empty.
- Status Bar:** Shows 'Ready', 'Ln 19', 'Col 1', 'Ch 1', and 'INS'.

Starting the Debugging Session

- Make sure you are in a Debug configuration
- Press F5
- Or click on Debug icon  
- Or select menu Debug – Start Debugging



Debugging Example #1

- Running in the debugger

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Visual C++ IDE with the following components:

- DebugConsoleApp - Microsoft Visual C++ [break] - DebugConsoleApp.cpp**: The main window displaying the source code of the program. The code is as follows:

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;

    if (x = y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;
}
```
- Solution Explorer - DebugConsoleApp**: Shows the project structure with folders for References, Source Files, Header Files, and Resource Files.
- Autos**: A table showing the current values of variables x and y.

Name	Value	Type
x	3	int
y	5	int
- Call Stack**: A table showing the current call stack.

Name	Language
DebugConsoleApp.exe!main() Line 19	C++
DebugConsoleApp.exe!mainCRTStartup() Line 259 + 0x19	C
kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()	

Debugging Example #1

Stepping, examine variables

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Visual C++ IDE in a debugging state. The main window displays the source code of `DebugConsoleApp.cpp`. A breakpoint is set at line 20, which is the `if (x = y)` statement. The Autos window shows the current state of variables: `x` and `y` are both integers with a value of 5. The Call Stack window shows the current call stack, including `DebugConsoleApp.exe!main()` at line 20, `DebugConsoleApp.exe!mainCRTStartup()` at line 259 + 0x19, and `kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()`.

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;

    if (x = y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;
}
```

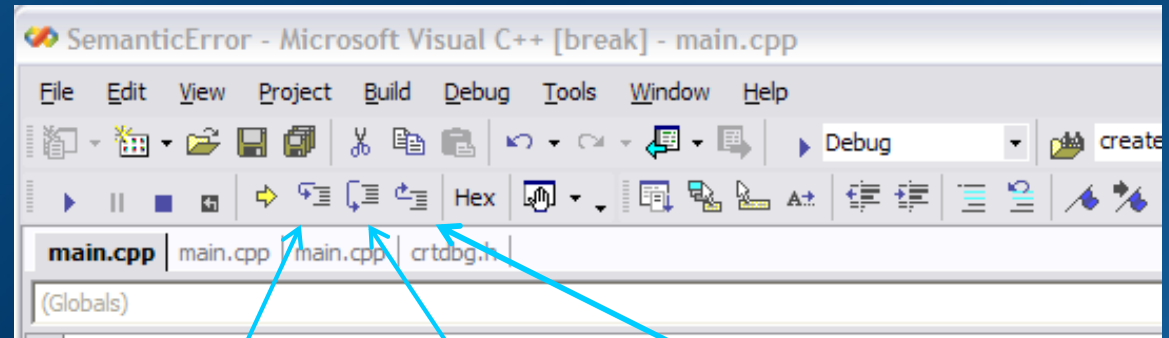
Name	Value	Type
x	5	int
y	5	int

Name	Language
DebugConsoleApp.exe!main() Line 20	C++
DebugConsoleApp.exe!mainCRTStartup() Line 259 + 0x19	C
kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()	

Execution Control

Stepping through your code

- Starting / Stopping
- Breaking
- Stepping through your application
 - (F10, F11 or Toolbar buttons)
- Run to a specific location
 - Run To Cursor (right-click menu)



F11
Step Into

F10
Step Over

Shift + F11
Step Out

Equivalent hot-keys

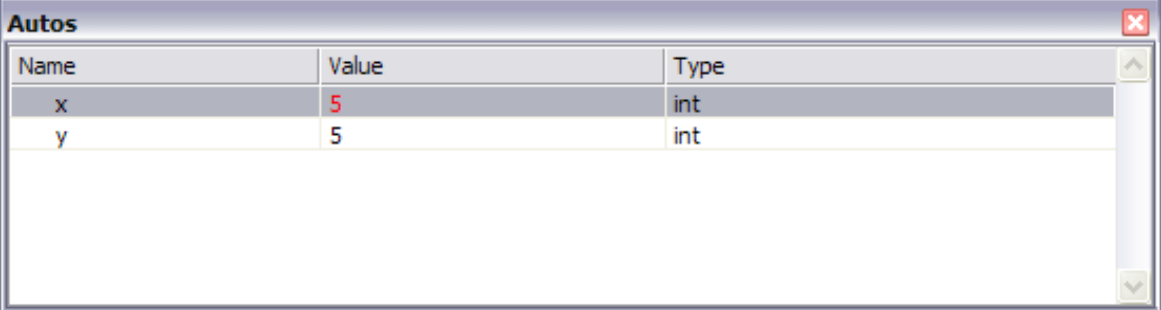


Microsoft®
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Autos Window

- **Name**
 - The names of all variables in the current statement and the previous statement. The current statement is the statement at the current execution location, which is the statement that will be executed next if execution continues.
- **Value**
 - The value contained by each variable. By default, integer variables are represented in decimal form.
- **Type**
 - The data type of each variable listed in the **Name** column.



Name	Value	Type
x	5	int
y	5	int



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Locals Window

- **Name**
 - This column contains the names of all local variables in the current scope.
- **Value**
 - The value contained by each variable. By default, integer variables are represented in decimal form.
- **Type**
 - The data type of each variable listed in the **Name** column.



Name	Value	Type
x	5	int
y	5	int



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Watch window(s)

- Watch window displays Name, Value, and Type of variables
- Type in or click-drag variables into window
- Change values live while at break
- You have 4 independent Watch windows

Name	Value	Type
player	{x=25.000000 y=50.000000 state=24 }	Player
x	25.000000	float
y	50.000000	float
state	24	int
IsAlive	true	bool
Health	100	int

(VS 2005 & VC++ Express)

Name	Value	Type
x	5	int
y	634	int



Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Debugging Example #1 - Found error

DebugConsoleApp - Microsoft Visual C++ [break] - DebugConsoleApp.cpp

File Edit View Project Build Debug Tools Window Help

Debug render

Solution Explorer - DebugConsoleApp

DebugConsoleApp.cpp Disassembly

(Globals) main

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;

    if (x = y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;
}
```

Autos

Name	Value	Type
x	3	int
y	5	int

Call Stack

Name	Language
DebugConsoleApp.exe!main() Line 19	C++
DebugConsoleApp.exe!mainCRTStartup() Line 259 + 0x19	C
kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()	

Ready

Debugging Example #1 - Fixed error, recompiled, run, step

The screenshot shows the Microsoft Visual C++ IDE with the following components:

- Solution Explorer:** Shows the project 'SemanticError' with source files 'main.cpp' and 'main.cpp'.
- Code Editor:** Displays the source code for 'main.cpp'. The code is as follows:

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;

    if (x == y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;
}
```
- Autos Window:** Shows the current values of variables:

Name	Value	Type
x	3	int
y	5	int
- Call Stack Window:** Shows the current call stack:

Name	Language
SemanticError.exe!main() Line 21 + 0x2	C++
SemanticError.exe!mainCRTStartup() Line 259 + 0x19	C
kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()	

Debugging Example #1

- Step. Hey the code worked!

SemanticError - Microsoft Visual C++ [break] - main.cpp

File Edit View Project Build Debug Tools Window Help

Debug render

Solution Explorer - SemanticError

Solution 'DebugConsoleApps' (2 projects)

- SemanticError
 - References
 - Source Files
 - main.cpp
 - Header Files
 - Resource Files
- Stepping
 - References
 - Source Files
 - main.cpp
 - Header Files
 - Resource Files

main.cpp main.cpp Disassembly

(Globals) main

```
// DebugConsoleApp.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int x, y;
    cout << "Enter first integer: ";
    cin >> x;

    cout << "Enter second integer: ";
    cin >> y;

    if (x == y)
        cout << "They are Equal!" << endl;
    else if (x > y)
        cout << "The first one is bigger!" << endl;
    else
        cout << "The second one is bigger!" << endl;
}
```

Autos

Name	Value	Type
------	-------	------

Call Stack

Name	Language
SemanticError.exe!main() Line 24	C++
SemanticError.exe!mainCRTStartup() Line 259 + 0x19	C
kernel32.dll!7c816fd7()	

Autos Watch 1 Locals Output

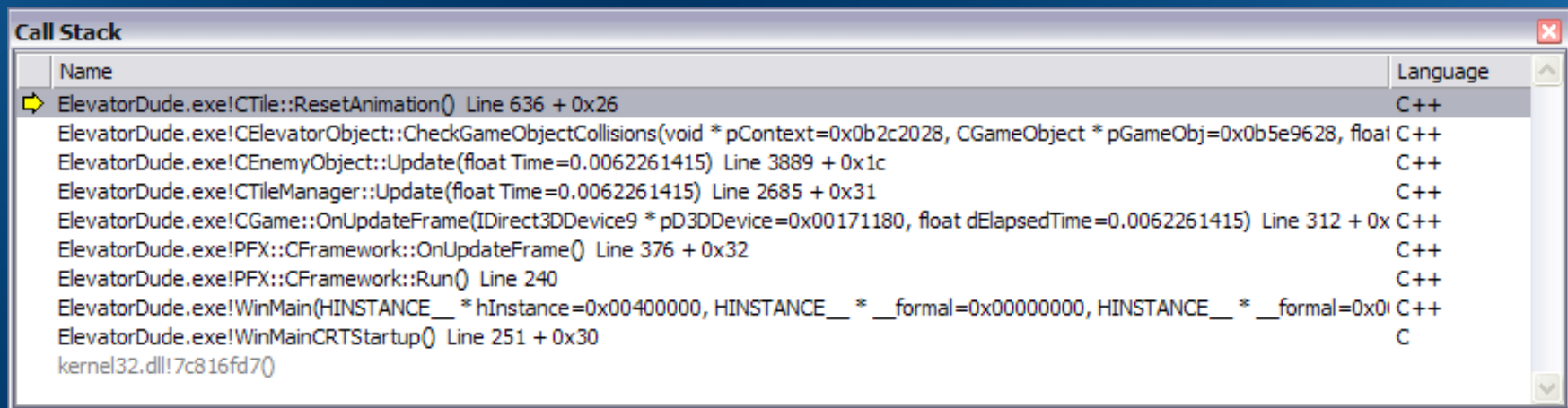
Ready

Call Stack Command Window

Ln 24 Col 1 Ch 1 INS

The Call Stack

- Call stack window displays each function name in the order they were called.
- **Yellow arrow** identifies the stack frame where the execution pointer is located
- Double-clicking on a function name takes you to the function in source code
- Click Debug – Windows – Call Stack to show window (if hidden). It is shown by default.



Example #2

How to Use Conditional Breakpoints

These are breakpoints that only “break” based on a specific condition. In this example, we will put a conditional breakpoint in the “for” loop and the breakpoint will only stop when our condition is met.

```
// main.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----

int main()
{
    int Idx;
    for (Idx = 0; Idx < 1000; Idx++)
    {
        cout << "Line " << Idx << endl;
    }

    system("pause");

    return 0;
}
```



Microsoft®
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

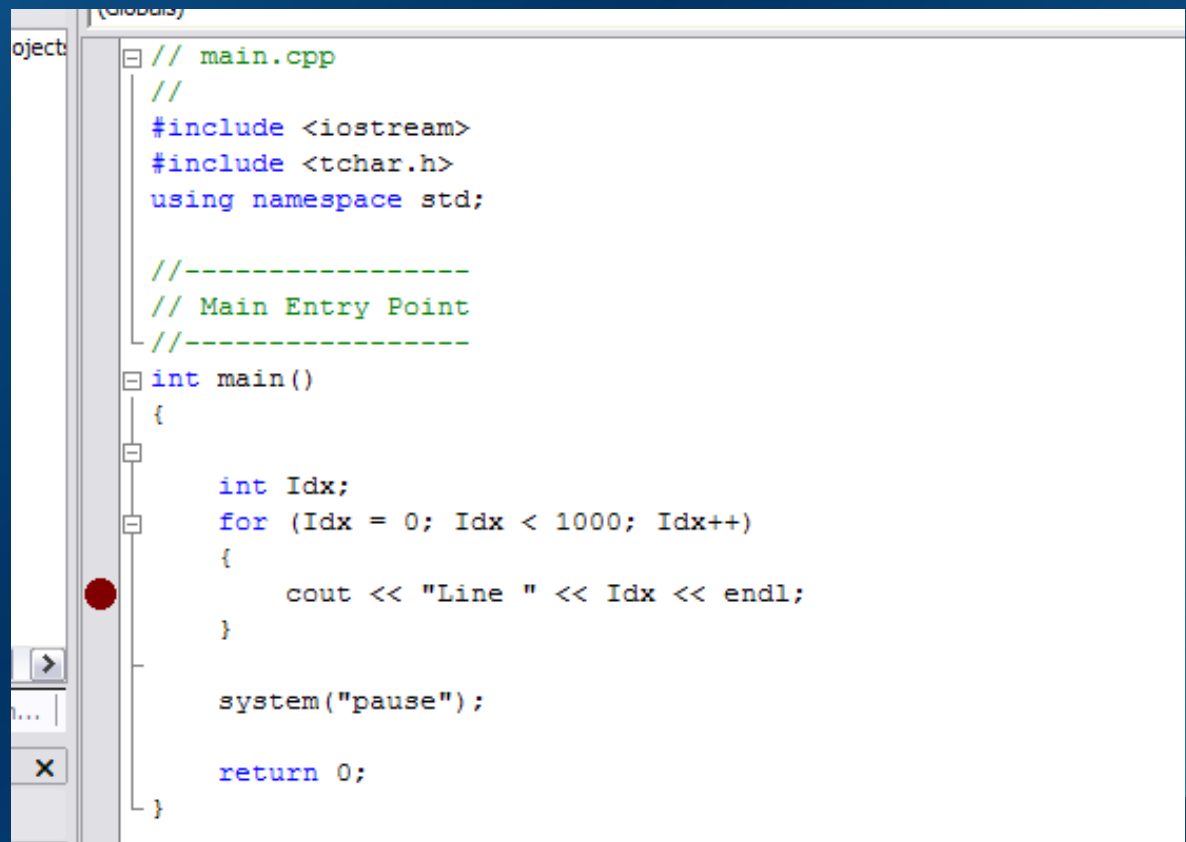
Example #2

Add a breakpoint with a condition

Let's say you want to break execution only when a condition is met rather than break each time the loop cycles.

1. Add a breakpoint on the line you're interested in.

Then we'll configure a condition to it.



```
// main.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----

int main()
{
    int Idx;
    for (Idx = 0; Idx < 1000; Idx++)
    {
        cout << "Line " << Idx << endl;
    }

    system("pause");

    return 0;
}
```



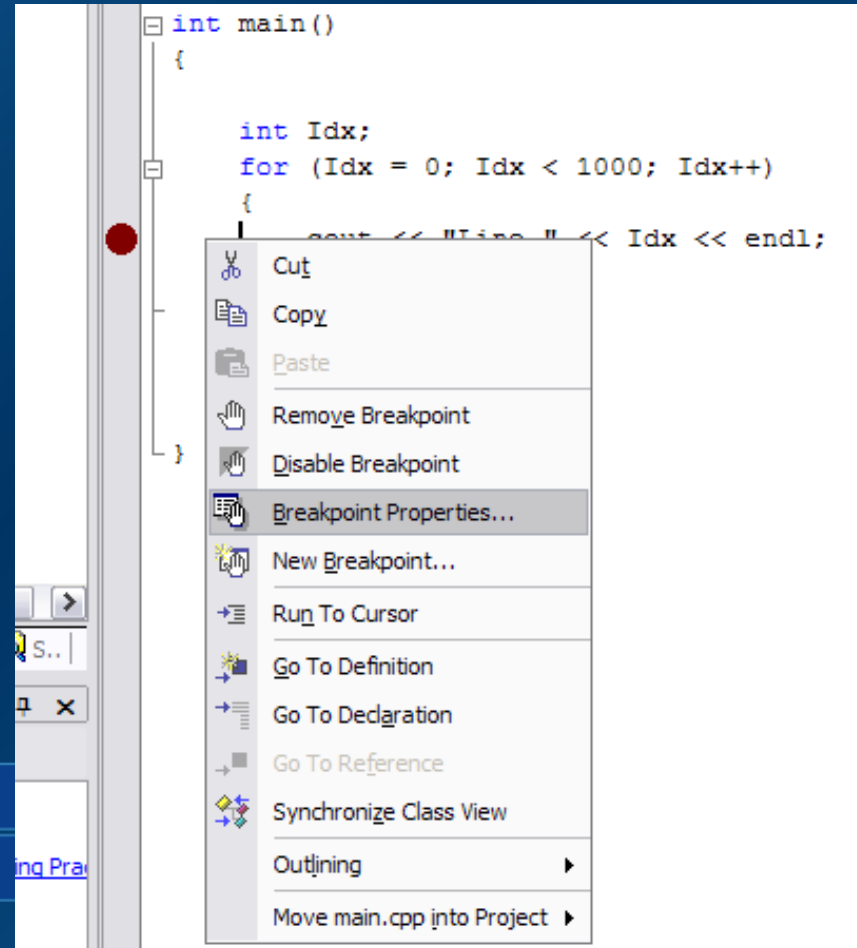
Microsoft®
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Example #2

Breakpoint Properties (VS 2003)

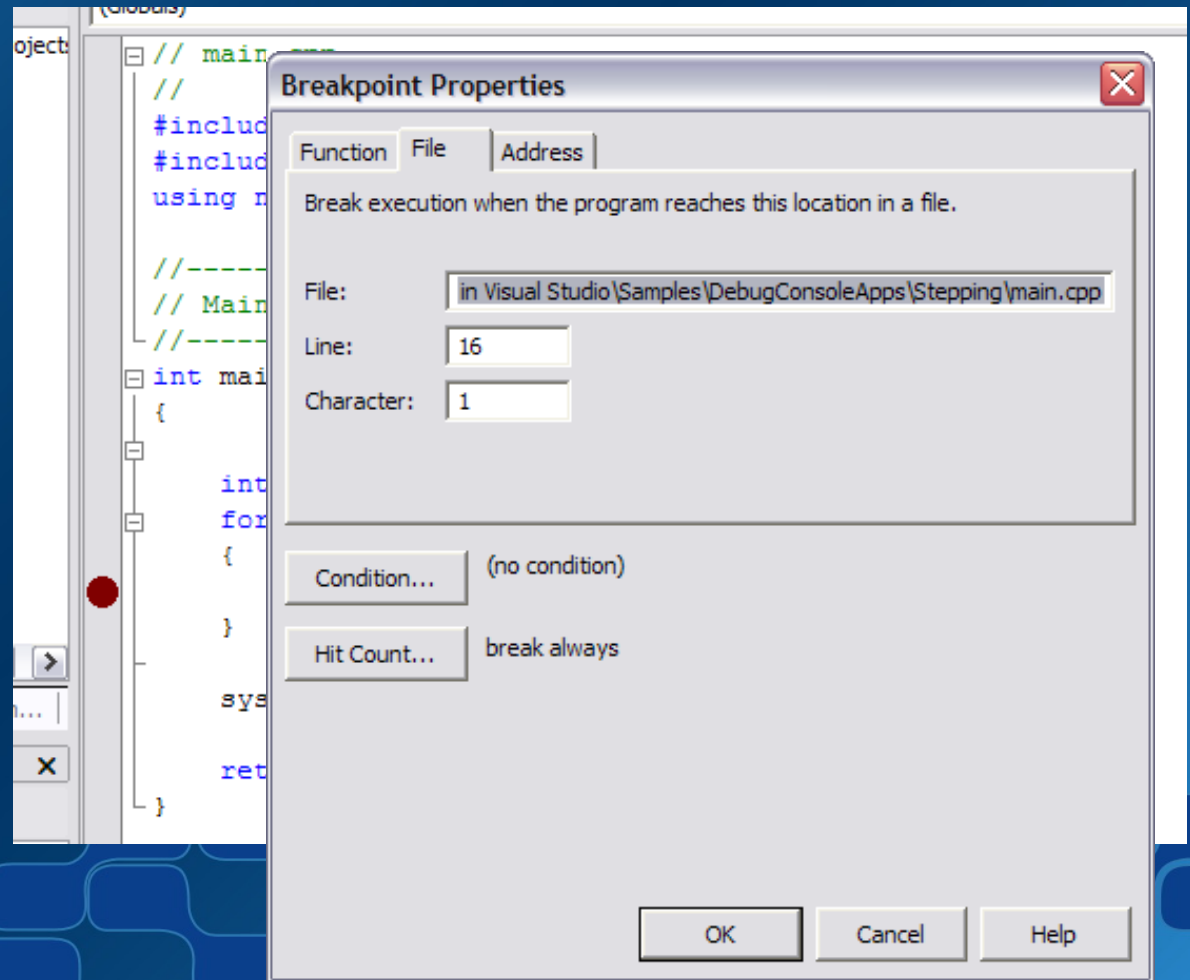
2. Right-mouse click on the breakpoint
3. Select **Breakpoint Properties...**



Example #2

Open Breakpoint Properties Dialog (VS 2003)

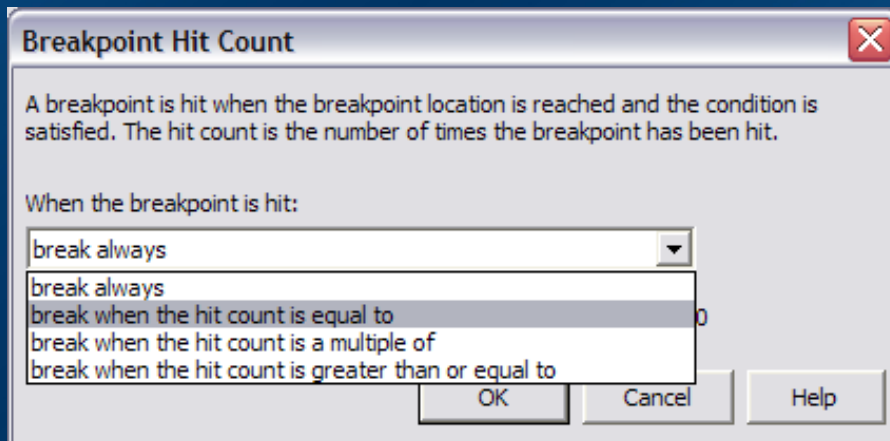
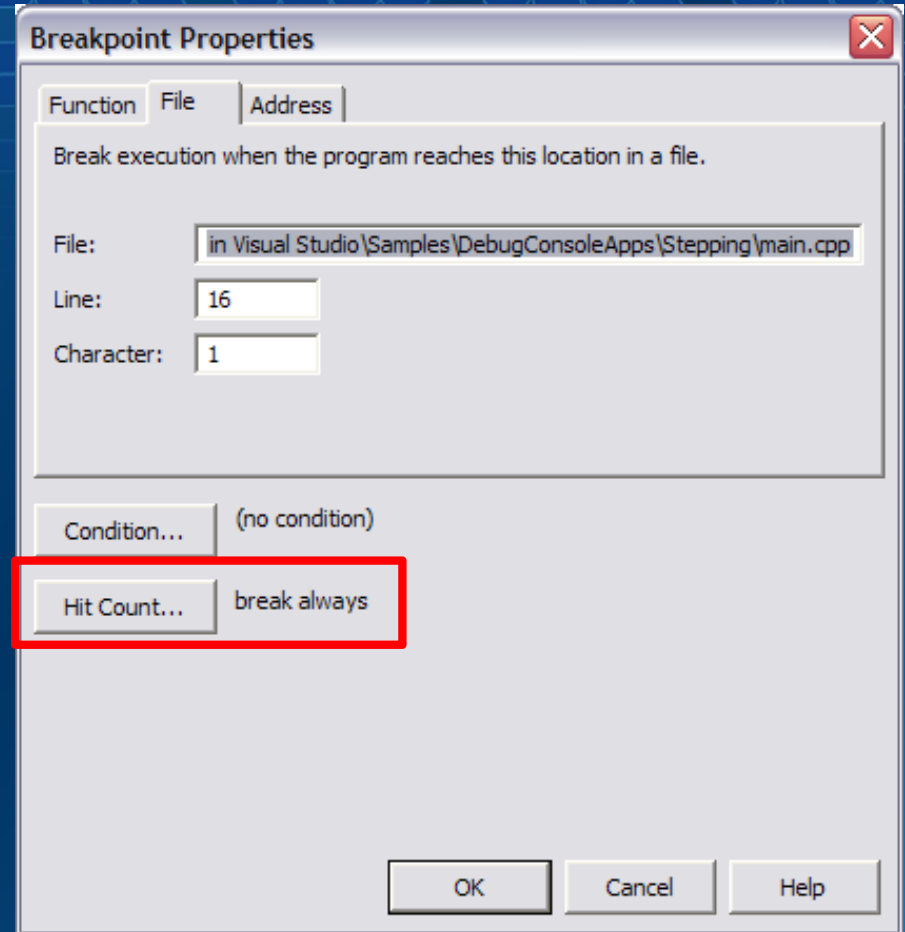
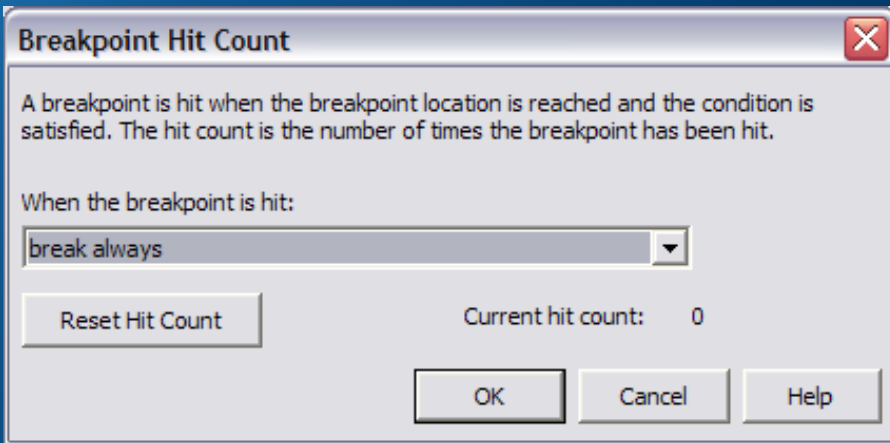
4. The breakpoint dialog will open.



Example #2

Set hit count condition (VS 2003)

- 5. Click on **Hit Count...** button
- Select frequency of the break
- Default is “break always”



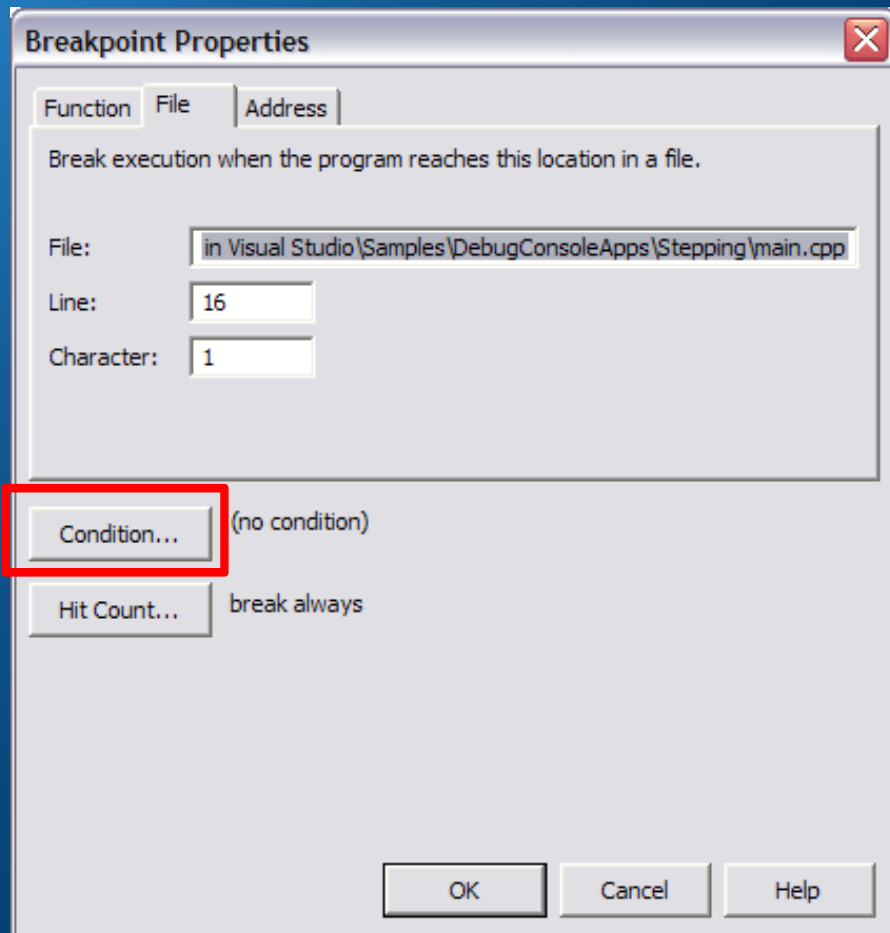
Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

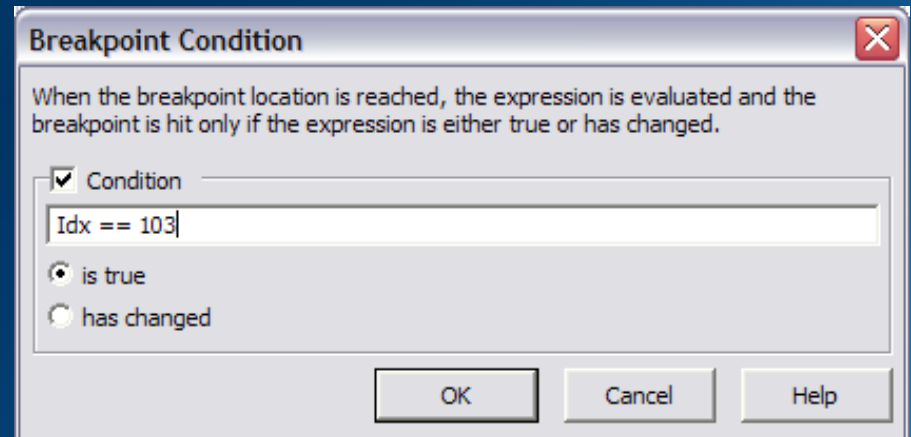
Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Example #2

Set a condition (VS 2003)



6. Click on **Condition...** to set the criteria for breaking.



Microsoft®

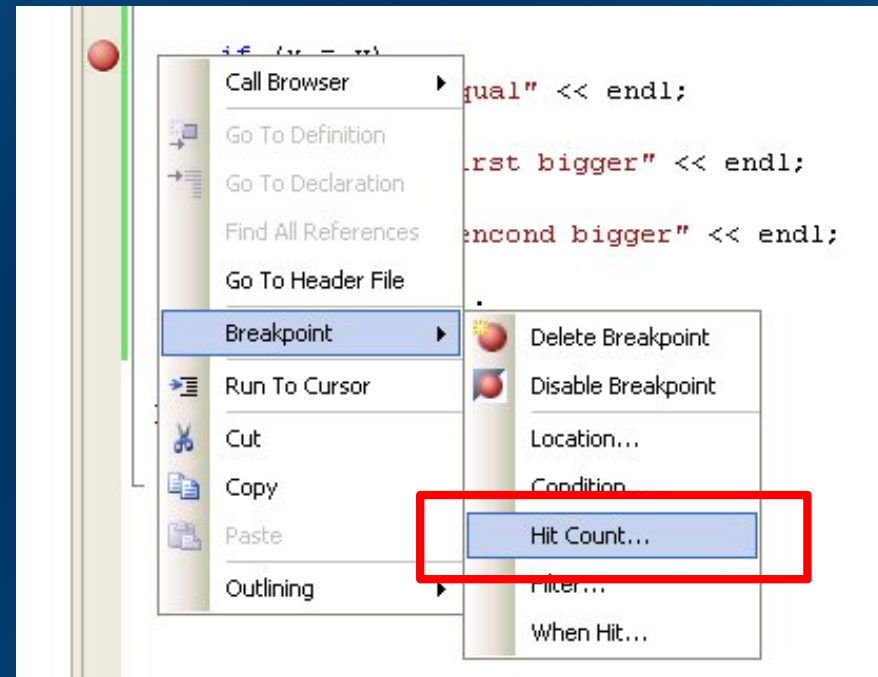
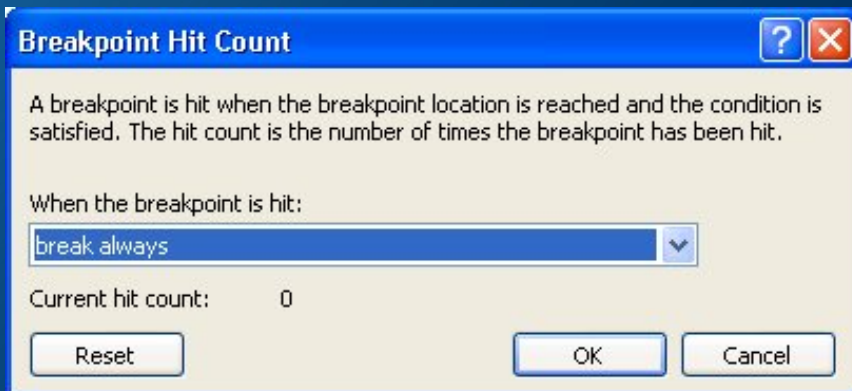
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Example #2

Set hit count condition (VS 2005 & V C++ Express 2005)

- Right-mouse click on the breakpoint
- Select **Hit Count...**



Microsoft®

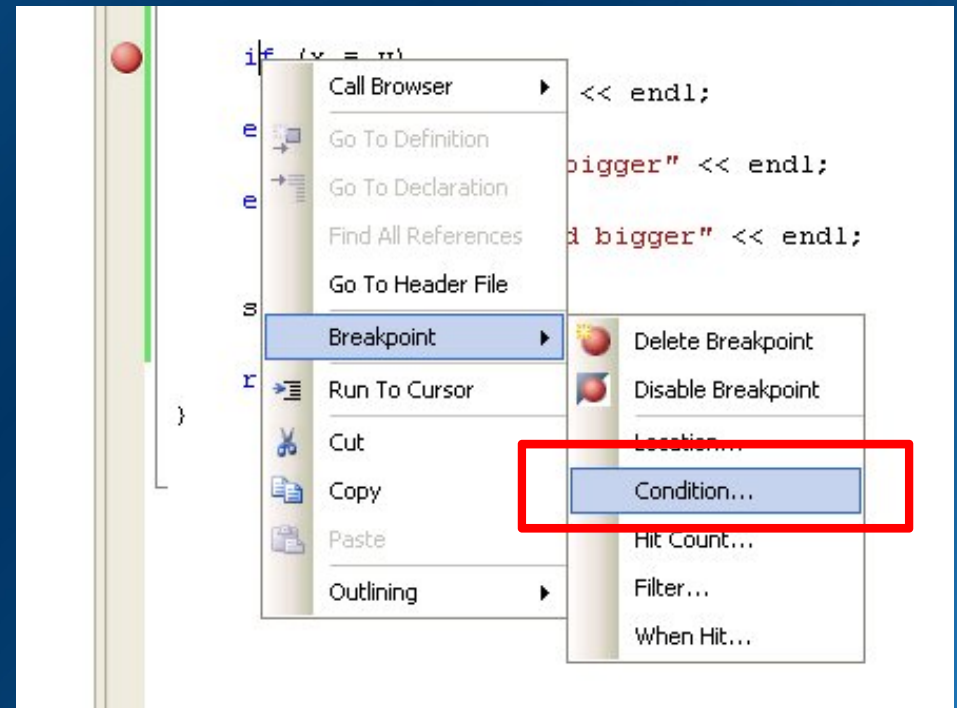
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Example #2

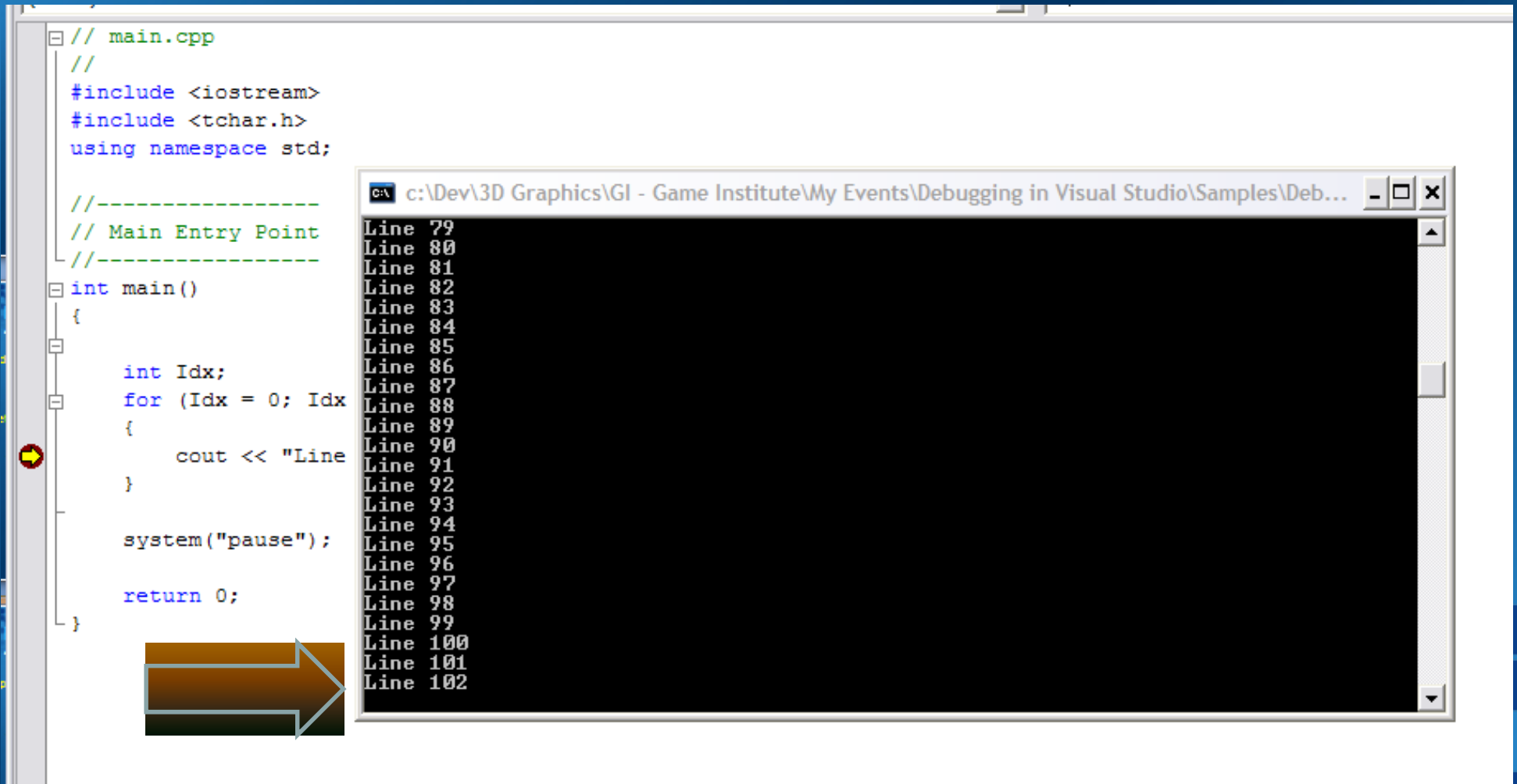
Set a condition (VS 2005 & V C++ Express 2005)

- Right-mouse click on the breakpoint
- Select **Condition...**



Example #2

Result - Code breaks at the desired condition



The screenshot displays the Visual Studio 2005 IDE. On the left, the code editor shows a C++ file named `main.cpp`. The code includes `<iostream>` and `<tchar.h>`, and uses the `std` namespace. A `for` loop is defined in the `main` function, starting at `Idx = 0` and incrementing by 1. A `cout` statement prints "Line" followed by the current value of `Idx`. The loop is enclosed in a `system("pause");` call, and the function returns 0. A yellow arrow points to the `cout` statement on line 90. A large blue arrow points from the `cout` statement to the console window on the right. The console window, titled `c:\Dev\3D Graphics\GI - Game Institute\My Events\Debugging in Visual Studio\Samples\Deb...`, shows a list of lines from 79 to 102, indicating that the program has executed all lines of the `for` loop.

```
// main.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>
using namespace std;

//-----
// Main Entry Point
//-----
int main()
{
    int Idx;
    for (Idx = 0; Idx
    {
        cout << "Line
    }

    system("pause");

    return 0;
}
```

Line 79
Line 80
Line 81
Line 82
Line 83
Line 84
Line 85
Line 86
Line 87
Line 88
Line 89
Line 90
Line 91
Line 92
Line 93
Line 94
Line 95
Line 96
Line 97
Line 98
Line 99
Line 100
Line 101
Line 102

Memory Leaks!

How do you know you have them?

- Basic project setup to detect them
- We will use the C Run-Time library
- After building and running the program, the output window will display any memory leaks.
- We can call another function to force a breakpoint when the suspect memory is allocated.



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Memory Leaks!

Using some C Run-Time Functions

`_CrtDumpMemoryLeaks()`

Performs leak checking where called. You want to place this call at all possible exits of your app.

`_CrtSetDbgFlag ()`

Sets debugging flags for the C run-time library.

<code>_CrtSetDbgFlag ()</code> flag	What it does
<code>_CRTDBG_REPORT_FLAG</code>	Gets current flag(s)
<code>_CRTDBG_LEAK_CHECK_DF</code>	Perform automatic leak checking at program exit through a call to _CrtDumpMemoryLeaks



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Example #3

Memory Leaks

Setting up for detection for Console or Win32

“Hook” into the C Run-time libraries to use the debug heap

1. Include the following lines in your program as the basics.

```
// main.cpp
//
#include <iostream>
#include <tchar.h>

#define _CRTDBG_MAP_ALLOC
#include <stdlib.h>
#include <crtDBG.h>

//-----
// main()
int main(int argc, _TCHAR* argv[])
{
    int *pMyVar;

    int nDbgFlags = _CrtSetDbgFlag(_CRTDBG_REPORT_FLAG)
    nDbgFlags |= _CRTDBG_LEAK_CHECK_DF;
    _CrtSetDbgFlag(nDbgFlags);

    // Allocate new memory for an integer
    pMyVar = new int;

    // Notice we did not delete the memory!

    return 0;
}
```

Memory Leaks

`_CRTDBG_MAP_ALLOC_`

- Including `crtdbg.h`, you map the `malloc` and `free` functions to their Debug versions, `_malloc_dbg` and `_free_dbg`, which keep track of memory allocation and deallocation
- Without `#define _CRTDBG_MAP_ALLOC_`:
 - Memory allocation number (inside curly braces)
 - Block type (normal, client or CRT)
 - Memory location in hex
 - Size of block in bytes
 - Contents of the first 16 bytes in hex
- With it defined you get all the above plus:
 - File name
 - Line number



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Memory Leaks

Output window dump

```
Output
Debug
Detected memory leaks!
Dumping objects ->
c:\dev\debugconsoleapps\memoryleak\main.cpp(17) : {45} normal block at 0x00323A08, 4 bytes long.
  Data: < > CD CD CD CD
Object dump complete.
The program '[3732] MemoryLeak.exe: Native' has exited with code 0 (0x0).
```

Source file
where leak
occurred

Line
number
within
source file

Memory
allocation
number

Block
type

Memory
location

Block
size



Microsoft®
Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Memory Leaks

Locating the memory leak

```
Detected memory leaks!  
Dumping objects ->  
c:\program files\microsoft visual studio .net 2003\vc7\include\crtdbg.h(689) : {46} normal block at 0x00323828, 4 bytes long.  
Data: < > CD CD CD CD  
Object dump complete.  
The program '[2296] MemoryLeak.exe: Native' has exited with code 0 (0x0).
```

_CrtSetBreakAlloc(<allocation number>)

- Sets a breakpoint on a specified object allocation order number (debug version only).



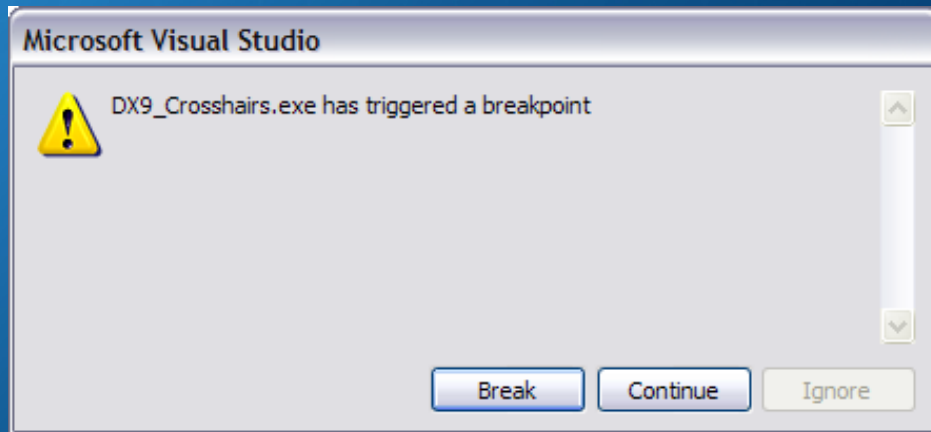
Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

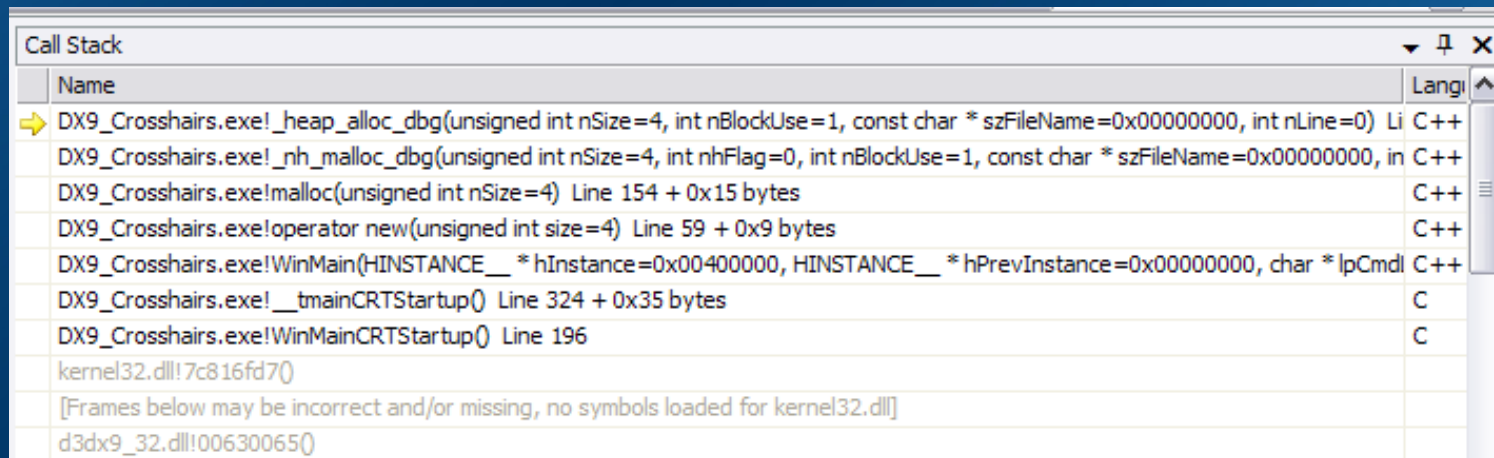
Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Memory Leaks

Locating the memory leak



Drill down through Call Stack window to find the last called function that belongs to your application. (not a function from a library)



udio 2005

So what have we talked about. . .

- You will spend your time finding semantic errors because the compiler catches syntax errors.
- Visual Studio has a rich suite of debugging tools to help you Trace the execution and Watch variables.
- Control program execution by stopping and stepping through your code.
- Watch variable values to see if they look right.
- Use the C Run-time library for finding memory leaks.



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005

Microsoft Visual Studio is a registered trademark of Microsoft Corp.

Debugging in Visual Studio

Any questions?

You can contact me in the forums at the Game Institute or you can email me at:

smjones@gameinstitute.com

info@gameengineer.net



Microsoft®

Visual Studio 2005