

# **The New C Standard** (Excerpted material)

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**An Economic and Cultural Commentary**

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### 3.7.1

character  
single-byte

**character**

single-byte character (C) bit representation that fits in a byte

**Commentary**

This is the C-specific definition of the term *character*. It is a little circular in that byte is defined in terms of a character. The definition of the term *character*, referring to it in the abstract sense, is given in the previous sentence. Members of the basic source character set are required to fit in a byte. By definition any other character that fits in a byte is a single-byte character.

**C++**

The C++ Standard does not define the term *character*. This term has different meanings in different application contexts and human cultures. In a language that supports overloading, it makes no sense to restrict the usage of this term to a particular instance.

**Coding Guidelines**

The terms character and byte are often used interchangeably by C developers. Changing developers' existing terminological habits may be very difficult, but this is not a reason why coding guideline documents should be sloppy in their use of terminology. Separating the two concepts can be helpful in highlighting potential problems associated with assuming particular representations for members of character sets (usually Ascii).

byte  
addressable unit

basic source  
character set

# References