NASM — The Netwide Assembler

version 2.10.01−20120525

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 What Is NASM?

The Netwide Assembler, NASM, is an 80x86 and x86−64 assembler designed for portability and modularity. It supports a range of object file formats, including Linux and *BSD a.out, ELF, COFF, Mach−O, Microsoft 16−bit OBJ, Win32 and Win64. It will also output plain binary files. Its syntax is designed to be simple and easy to understand, similar to Intel's but less complex. It supports all currently known x86 architectural extensions, and has strong support for macros.

1.1.1 Why Yet Another Assembler?

The Netwide Assembler grew out of an idea on comp.lang.asm.x86 (or possibly alt.lang.asm – I forget which), which was essentially that there didn't seem to be a good *free* x86−series assembler around, and that maybe someone ought to write one.

- a86 is good, but not free, and in particular you don't get any 32−bit capability until you pay. It's DOS only, too.
- gas is free, and ports over to DOS and Unix, but it's not very good, since it's designed to be a back end to gcc, which always feeds it correct code. So its error checking is minimal. Also, its syntax is horrible, from the point of view of anyone trying to actually *write* anything in it. Plus you can't write 16−bit code in it (properly.)
- as86 is specific to Minix and Linux, and (my version at least) doesn't seem to have much (or any) documentation.
- MASM isn't very good, and it's (was) expensive, and it runs only under DOS.
- TASM is better, but still strives for MASM compatibility, which means millions of directives and tons of red tape. And its syntax is essentially MASM's, with the contradictions and quirks that entails (although it sorts out some of those by means of Ideal mode.) It's expensive too. And it's DOS−only.

So here, for your coding pleasure, is NASM. At present it's still in prototype stage – we don't promise that it can outperform any of these assemblers. But please, *please* send us bug reports, fixes, helpful information, and anything else you can get your hands on (and thanks to the many people who've done this already! You all know who you are), and we'll improve it out of all recognition. Again.

1.1.2 License Conditions

Please see the file LICENSE, supplied as part of any NASM distribution archive, for the license conditions under which you may use NASM. NASM is now under the so−called 2−clause BSD license, also known as the simplified BSD license.

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1.2 Contact Information

The current version of NASM (since about 0.98.08) is maintained by a team of developers, accessible through the nasm−devel mailing list (see below for the link). If you want to report a bug, please read [section 12.2](#page-128-1) first.

NASM has a website at <http://www.nasm.us/>. If it's not there, google for us!

New releases, release candidates, and daily development snapshots of NASM are available from the official web site.

Announcements are posted to [comp.lang.asm.x86](news:comp.lang.asm.x86), and to the web site <http://www.freshmeat.net/>.

If you want information about the current development status, please subscribe to the nasm−devel email list; see link from the website.

1.3 Installation

1.3.1 Installing NASM under MS−DOS or Windows

Once you've obtained the appropriate archive for NASM, nasm−XXX−dos.zip or nasm−XXX−win32.zip (where XXX denotes the version number of NASM contained in the archive), unpack it into its own directory (for example $c:\n$ nasm).

The archive will contain a set of executable files: the NASM executable file nasm.exe, the NDISASM executable file ndisasm.exe, and possibly additional utilities to handle the RDOFF file format.

The only file NASM needs to run is its own executable, so copy nasm.exe to a directory on your PATH, or alternatively edit autoexec.bat to add the nasm directory to your PATH (to do that under Windows XP, go to Start > Control Panel > System > Advanced > Environment Variables; these instructions may work under other versions of Windows as well.)

That's it – NASM is installed. You don't need the nasm directory to be present to run NASM (unless you've added it to your PATH), so you can delete it if you need to save space; however, you may want to keep the documentation or test programs.

If you've downloaded the DOS source archive, nasm−XXX.zip, the nasm directory will also contain the full NASM source code, and a selection of Makefiles you can (hopefully) use to rebuild your copy of NASM from scratch. See the file INSTALL in the source archive.

Note that a number of files are generated from other files by Perl scripts. Although the NASM source distribution includes these generated files, you will need to rebuild them (and hence, will need a Perl interpreter) if you change insns.dat, standard.mac or the documentation. It is possible future source distributions may not include these files at all. Ports of Perl for a variety of platforms, including DOS and Windows, are available from [www.cpan.org.](http://www.cpan.org/ports/)

1.3.2 Installing NASM under Unix

Once you've obtained the Unix source archive for NASM, nasm−XXX.tar.gz (where XXX denotes the version number of NASM contained in the archive), unpack it into a directory such as /usr/local/src. The archive, when unpacked, will create its own subdirectory nasm−XXX.

NASM is an auto−configuring package: once you've unpacked it, cd to the directory it's been unpacked into and type ./configure. This shell script will find the best C compiler to use for building NASM and set up Makefiles accordingly.

Once NASM has auto−configured, you can type make to build the nasm and ndisasm binaries, and then make install to install them in /usr/local/bin and install the man pages nasm.1 and ndisasm.1 in /usr/local/man/man1. Alternatively, you can give options such as −−prefix to the configure script (see the file INSTALL for more details), or install the programs yourself.

NASM also comes with a set of utilities for handling the RDOFF custom object−file format, which are in the rdoff subdirectory of the NASM archive. You can build these with make rdf and install them with make rdf_install, if you want them.

Chapter 2: Running NASM

2.1 NASM Command−Line Syntax

To assemble a file, you issue a command of the form

nasm −f <format> <filename> [−o <output>]

For example,

nasm −f elf myfile.asm

will assemble myfile.asm into an ELF object file myfile.o. And

nasm −f bin myfile.asm −o myfile.com

will assemble myfile.asm into a raw binary file myfile.com.

To produce a listing file, with the hex codes output from NASM displayed on the left of the original sources, use the −l option to give a listing file name, for example:

nasm −f coff myfile.asm −l myfile.lst

To get further usage instructions from NASM, try typing

nasm −h

As −hf, this will also list the available output file formats, and what they are.

If you use Linux but aren't sure whether your system is a out or ELF, type

file nasm

(in the directory in which you put the NASM binary when you installed it). If it says something like

nasm: ELF 32−bit LSB executable i386 (386 and up) Version 1

then your system is ELF, and you should use the option −f elf when you want NASM to produce Linux object files. If it says

nasm: Linux/i386 demand−paged executable (QMAGIC)

or something similar, your system is a.out, and you should use −f aout instead (Linux a.out systems have long been obsolete, and are rare these days.)

Like Unix compilers and assemblers, NASM is silent unless it goes wrong: you won't see any output at all, unless it gives error messages.

2.1.1 The −o Option: Specifying the Output File Name

NASM will normally choose the name of your output file for you; precisely how it does this is dependent on the object file format. For Microsoft object file formats (obj, win32 and win64), it will remove the .asm extension (or whatever extension you like to use – NASM doesn't care) from your source file name and substitute .obj. For Unix object file formats (aout, as86, coff, elf32, elf64, elfx32, ieee, macho32 and macho64) it will substitute .o. For dbg, rdf, ith and srec, it will use .dbg, .rdf,

.ith and .srec, respectively, and for the bin format it will simply remove the extension, so that myfile.asm produces the output file myfile.

If the output file already exists, NASM will overwrite it, unless it has the same name as the input file, in which case it will give a warning and use nasm. out as the output file name instead.

For situations in which this behaviour is unacceptable, NASM provides the −o command−line option, which allows you to specify your desired output file name. You invoke −o by following it with the name you wish for the output file, either with or without an intervening space. For example:

nasm −f bin program.asm −o program.com nasm −f bin driver.asm −odriver.sys

Note that this is a small o, and is different from a capital O , which is used to specify the number of optimisation passes required. See [section 2.1.22.](#page-23-1)

2.1.2 The −f Option: Specifying the Output File Format

If you do not supply the −f option to NASM, it will choose an output file format for you itself. In the distribution versions of NASM, the default is always bin; if you've compiled your own copy of NASM, you can redefine OF_DEFAULT at compile time and choose what you want the default to be.

Like −o, the intervening space between −f and the output file format is optional; so −f elf and −felf are both valid.

A complete list of the available output file formats can be given by issuing the command nasm −hf.

2.1.3 The −l Option: Generating a Listing File

If you supply the −l option to NASM, followed (with the usual optional space) by a file name, NASM will generate a source−listing file for you, in which addresses and generated code are listed on the left, and the actual source code, with expansions of multi−line macros (except those which specifically request no expansion in source listings: see [section 4.3.11](#page-52-1)) on the right. For example:

nasm −f elf myfile.asm −l myfile.lst

If a list file is selected, you may turn off listing for a section of your source with [list −], and turn it back on with [list +], (the default, obviously). There is no "user form" (without the brackets). This can be used to list only sections of interest, avoiding excessively long listings.

2.1.4 The −M Option: Generate Makefile Dependencies

This option can be used to generate makefile dependencies on stdout. This can be redirected to a file for further processing. For example:

nasm −M myfile.asm > myfile.dep

2.1.5 The −MG Option: Generate Makefile Dependencies

This option can be used to generate makefile dependencies on stdout. This differs from the −M option in that if a nonexisting file is encountered, it is assumed to be a generated file and is added to the dependency list without a prefix.

2.1.6 The −MF Option: Set Makefile Dependency File

This option can be used with the −M or −MG options to send the output to a file, rather than to stdout. For example:

nasm −M −MF myfile.dep myfile.asm

2.1.7 The −MD Option: Assemble and Generate Dependencies

The −MD option acts as the combination of the −M and −MF options (i.e. a filename has to be specified.) However, unlike the −M or −MG options, −MD does *not* inhibit the normal operation of the assembler. Use this to automatically generate updated dependencies with every assembly session. For example:

nasm −f elf −o myfile.o −MD myfile.dep myfile.asm

2.1.8 The −MT Option: Dependency Target Name

The −MT option can be used to override the default name of the dependency target. This is normally the same as the output filename, specified by the −o option.

2.1.9 The −MQ Option: Dependency Target Name (Quoted)

The −MQ option acts as the −MT option, except it tries to quote characters that have special meaning in Makefile syntax. This is not foolproof, as not all characters with special meaning are quotable in Make.

2.1.10 The −MP Option: Emit phony targets

When used with any of the dependency generation options, the −MP option causes NASM to emit a phony target without dependencies for each header file. This prevents Make from complaining if a header file has been removed.

2.1.11 The −F Option: Selecting a Debug Information Format

This option is used to select the format of the debug information emitted into the output file, to be used by a debugger (or *will* be). Prior to version 2.03.01, the use of this switch did *not* enable output of the selected debug info format. Use −g, see [section 2.1.12,](#page-20-5) to enable output. Versions 2.03.01 and later automatically enable −g if −F is specified.

A complete list of the available debug file formats for an output format can be seen by issuing the command nasm −f <format> −y. Not all output formats currently support debugging output. See [section 2.1.26.](#page-24-1)

This should not be confused with the −f dbq output format option which is not built into NASM by default. For information on how to enable it when building from the sources, see [section 7.14.](#page-99-2)

2.1.12 The −g Option: Enabling Debug Information.

This option can be used to generate debugging information in the specified format. See [section 2.1.11](#page-20-4). Using −g without −F results in emitting debug info in the default format, if any, for the selected output format. If no debug information is currently implemented in the selected output format, −g is *silently ignored*.

2.1.13 The −X Option: Selecting an Error Reporting Format

This option can be used to select an error reporting format for any error messages that might be produced by NASM.

Currently, two error reporting formats may be selected. They are the −Xvc option and the −Xgnu option. The GNU format is the default and looks like this:

filename.asm:65: error: specific error message

where filename.asm is the name of the source file in which the error was detected, 65 is the source file line number on which the error was detected, error is the severity of the error (this could be warning), and specific error message is a more detailed text message which should help pinpoint the exact problem.

The other format, specified by −Xvc is the style used by Microsoft Visual C++ and some other programs. It looks like this:

filename.asm(65) : error: specific error message

where the only difference is that the line number is in parentheses instead of being delimited by colons.

See also the Visual C⁺⁺ output format, [section 7.5.](#page-87-1)

2.1.14 The −Z Option: Send Errors to a File

Under MS−DOS it can be difficult (though there are ways) to redirect the standard−error output of a program to a file. Since NASM usually produces its warning and error messages on stderr, this can make it hard to capture the errors if (for example) you want to load them into an editor.

NASM therefore provides the −Z option, taking a filename argument which causes errors to be sent to the specified files rather than standard error. Therefore you can redirect the errors into a file by typing

nasm −Z myfile.err −f obj myfile.asm

In earlier versions of NASM, this option was called −E, but it was changed since −E is an option conventionally used for preprocessing only, with disastrous results. See [section 2.1.20.](#page-22-3)

2.1.15 The −s Option: Send Errors to stdout

The −s option redirects error messages to stdout rather than stderr, so it can be redirected under MS−DOS. To assemble the file myfile.asm and pipe its output to the more program, you can type:

nasm −s −f obj myfile.asm | more

See also the −Z option, [section 2.1.14.](#page-21-0)

2.1.16 The −i Option: Include File Search Directories

When NASM sees the $\frac{2}{3}$ include or $\frac{2}{3}$ pathsearch directive in a source file (see [section 4.6.1](#page-58-0), [section](#page-58-1) [4.6.2](#page-58-1) or [section 3.2.3\)](#page-30-0), it will search for the given file not only in the current directory, but also in any directories specified on the command line by the use of the −i option. Therefore you can include files from a macro library, for example, by typing

nasm −ic:\macrolib\ −f obj myfile.asm

(As usual, a space between −i and the path name is allowed, and optional).

NASM, in the interests of complete source−code portability, does not understand the file naming conventions of the OS it is running on; the string you provide as an argument to the −i option will be prepended exactly as written to the name of the include file. Therefore the trailing backslash in the above example is necessary. Under Unix, a trailing forward slash is similarly necessary.

(You can use this to your advantage, if you're really perverse, by noting that the option −ifoo will cause %include "bar.i" to search for the file foobar.i...)

If you want to define a *standard* include search path, similar to /usr/include on Unix systems, you should place one or more −i directives in the NASMENV environment variable (see [section 2.1.28\)](#page-25-1).

For Makefile compatibility with many C compilers, this option can also be specified as −I.

2.1.17 The −p Option: Pre−Include a File

NASM allows you to specify files to be *pre−included* into your source file, by the use of the −p option. So running

nasm myfile.asm −p myinc.inc

is equivalent to running nasm myfile.asm and placing the directive %include "myinc.inc" at the start of the file.

For consistency with the $-L$, $-D$ and $-U$ options, this option can also be specified as $-D$.

2.1.18 The −d Option: Pre−Define a Macro

Just as the −p option gives an alternative to placing %include directives at the start of a source file, the −d option gives an alternative to placing a %define directive. You could code

nasm myfile.asm −dFOO=100

as an alternative to placing the directive

%define FOO 100

at the start of the file. You can miss off the macro value, as well: the option −dFOO is equivalent to coding %define FOO. This form of the directive may be useful for selecting assembly−time options which are then tested using %ifdef, for example −dDEBUG.

For Makefile compatibility with many C compilers, this option can also be specified as −D.

2.1.19 The −u Option: Undefine a Macro

The −u option undefines a macro that would otherwise have been pre−defined, either automatically or by a −p or −d option specified earlier on the command lines.

For example, the following command line:

nasm myfile.asm −dFOO=100 −uFOO

would result in FOO *not* being a predefined macro in the program. This is useful to override options specified at a different point in a Makefile.

For Makefile compatibility with many C compilers, this option can also be specified as −U.

2.1.20 The −E Option: Preprocess Only

NASM allows the preprocessor to be run on its own, up to a point. Using the −E option (which requires no arguments) will cause NASM to preprocess its input file, expand all the macro references, remove all the comments and preprocessor directives, and print the resulting file on standard output (or save it to a file, if the −o option is also used).

This option cannot be applied to programs which require the preprocessor to evaluate expressions which depend on the values of symbols: so code such as

%assign tablesize (\$−tablestart)

will cause an error in preprocess−only mode.

For compatiblity with older version of NASM, this option can also be written −e. −E in older versions of NASM was the equivalent of the current −Z option, [section 2.1.14.](#page-21-0)

2.1.21 The −a Option: Don't Preprocess At All

If NASM is being used as the back end to a compiler, it might be desirable to suppress preprocessing completely and assume the compiler has already done it, to save time and increase compilation speeds. The −a option, requiring no argument, instructs NASM to replace its powerful preprocessor with a stub preprocessor which does nothing.

2.1.22 The −O Option: Specifying Multipass Optimization

Using the −O option, you can tell NASM to carry out different levels of optimization. The syntax is:

- −O0: No optimization. All operands take their long forms, if a short form is not specified, except conditional jumps. This is intended to match NASM 0.98 behavior.
- −O1: Minimal optimization. As above, but immediate operands which will fit in a signed byte are optimized, unless the long form is specified. Conditional jumps default to the long form unless otherwise specified.
- −Ox (where x is the actual letter x): Multipass optimization. Minimize branch offsets and signed immediate bytes, overriding size specification unless the strict keyword has been used (see [section](#page-37-0) [3.7\)](#page-37-0). For compatibility with earlier releases, the letter x may also be any number greater than one. This number has no effect on the actual number of passes.

The −Ox mode is recommended for most uses, and is the default since NASM 2.09.

Note that this is a capital O, and is different from a small o, which is used to specify the output file name. See [section 2.1.1.](#page-18-2)

2.1.23 The −t Option: Enable TASM Compatibility Mode

NASM includes a limited form of compatibility with Borland's TASM. When NASM's −t option is used, the following changes are made:

- local labels may be prefixed with @@ instead of .
- size override is supported within brackets. In TASM compatible mode, a size override inside square brackets changes the size of the operand, and not the address type of the operand as it does in NASM syntax. E.g. mov eax, [DWORD val] is valid syntax in TASM compatibility mode. Note that you lose the ability to override the default address type for the instruction.
- unprefixed forms of some directives supported (arg, elif, else, endif, if, ifdef, ifdifi, ifndef, include, local)

2.1.24 The −w and −W Options: Enable or Disable Assembly Warnings

NASM can observe many conditions during the course of assembly which are worth mentioning to the user, but not a sufficiently severe error to justify NASM refusing to generate an output file. These conditions are reported like errors, but come up with the word 'warning' before the message. Warnings do not prevent NASM from generating an output file and returning a success status to the operating system.

Some conditions are even less severe than that: they are only sometimes worth mentioning to the user. Therefore NASM supports the −w command−line option, which enables or disables certain classes of assembly warning. Such warning classes are described by a name, for example orphan−labels; you can enable warnings of this class by the command−line option −w+orphan−labels and disable it by −w−orphan−labels.

The suppressible warning classes are:

- macro−params covers warnings about multi−line macros being invoked with the wrong number of parameters. This warning class is enabled by default; see [section 4.3.1](#page-46-0) for an example of why you might want to disable it.
- macro−selfref warns if a macro references itself. This warning class is disabled by default.
- macro−defaults warns when a macro has more default parameters than optional parameters. This warning class is enabled by default; see [section 4.3.5](#page-49-0) for why you might want to disable it.
- orphan−labels covers warnings about source lines which contain no instruction but define a label without a trailing colon. NASM warns about this somewhat obscure condition by default; see [section 3.1](#page-28-1) for more information.
- number−overflow covers warnings about numeric constants which don't fit in 64 bits. This warning class is enabled by default.
- gnu−elf−extensions warns if 8−bit or 16−bit relocations are used in −f elf format. The GNU extensions allow this. This warning class is disabled by default.
- float−overflow warns about floating point overflow. Enabled by default.
- float−denorm warns about floating point denormals. Disabled by default.
- float−underflow warns about floating point underflow. Disabled by default.
- float−toolong warns about too many digits in floating−point numbers. Enabled by default.
- user controls %warning directives (see [section 4.9\)](#page-64-1). Enabled by default.
- lock warns about LOCK prefixes on unlockable instructions. Enabled by default.
- hle warns about invalid use of the HLE XACQUIRE or XRELEASE prefixes. Enabled by default.
- error causes warnings to be treated as errors. Disabled by default.
- all is an alias for *all* suppressible warning classes (not including error). Thus, −w+all enables all available warnings.

In addition, you can set warning classes across sections. Warning classes may be enabled with [warning +warning−name], disabled with [warning −warning−name] or reset to their original value with [warning *warning−name]. No "user form" (without the brackets) exists.

Since version 2.00, NASM has also supported the gcc−like syntax −Wwarning and −Wno−warning instead of −w+warning and −w−warning, respectively.

2.1.25 The −v Option: Display Version Info

Typing NASM −v will display the version of NASM which you are using, and the date on which it was compiled.

You will need the version number if you report a bug.

2.1.26 The −y Option: Display Available Debug Info Formats

Typing nasm –f <option> -y will display a list of the available debug info formats for the given output format. The default format is indicated by an asterisk. For example:

nasm −f elf −y

```
valid debug formats for 'elf32' output format are 
   ('*' denotes default): 
   * stabs ELF32 (i386) stabs debug format for Linux 
     dwarf elf32 (i386) dwarf debug format for Linux
```
2.1.27 The −−prefix and −−postfix Options.

The −−prefix and −−postfix options prepend or append (respectively) the given argument to all global or extern variables. E.g. −−prefix _ will prepend the underscore to all global and external variables, as C sometimes (but not always) likes it.

2.1.28 The NASMENV Environment Variable

If you define an environment variable called NASMENV, the program will interpret it as a list of extra command−line options, which are processed before the real command line. You can use this to define standard search directories for include files, by putting −i options in the NASMENV variable.

The value of the variable is split up at white space, so that the value −s −ic:\nasmlib\ will be treated as two separate options. However, that means that the value −dNAME="my name" won't do what you might want, because it will be split at the space and the NASM command−line processing will get confused by the two nonsensical words −dNAME="my and name".

To get round this, NASM provides a feature whereby, if you begin the NASMENV environment variable with some character that isn't a minus sign, then NASM will treat this character as the separator character for options. So setting the NASMENV variable to the value !−s!−ic:\nasmlib\ is equivalent to setting it to −s −ic:\nasmlib\, but !−dNAME="my name" will work.

This environment variable was previously called NASM. This was changed with version 0.98.31.

2.2 Quick Start for MASM Users

If you're used to writing programs with MASM, or with TASM in MASM−compatible (non−Ideal) mode, or with a86, this section attempts to outline the major differences between MASM's syntax and NASM's. If you're not already used to MASM, it's probably worth skipping this section.

2.2.1 NASM Is Case−Sensitive

One simple difference is that NASM is case−sensitive. It makes a difference whether you call your label foo, Foo or FOO. If you're assembling to DOS or OS/2 . OBJ files, you can invoke the UPPERCASE directive (documented in [section 7.4\)](#page-83-2) to ensure that all symbols exported to other code modules are forced to be upper case; but even then, *within* a single module, NASM will distinguish between labels differing only in case.

2.2.2 NASM Requires Square Brackets For Memory References

NASM was designed with simplicity of syntax in mind. One of the design goals of NASM is that it should be possible, as far as is practical, for the user to look at a single line of NASM code and tell what opcode is generated by it. You can't do this in MASM: if you declare, for example,

then the two lines of code

generate completely different opcodes, despite having identical−looking syntaxes.

NASM avoids this undesirable situation by having a much simpler syntax for memory references. The rule is simply that any access to the *contents* of a memory location requires square brackets around the address, and any access to the *address* of a variable doesn't. So an instruction of the form mov ax,foo will *always* refer to a compile−time constant, whether it's an EQU or the address of a variable; and to access the *contents* of the variable bar, you must code mov ax,[bar].

This also means that NASM has no need for MASM's OFFSET keyword, since the MASM code mov ax,offset bar means exactly the same thing as NASM's mov ax,bar. If you're trying to get large amounts of MASM code to assemble sensibly under NASM, you can always code %idefine offset to make the preprocessor treat the OFFSET keyword as a no−op.

This issue is even more confusing in a86, where declaring a label with a trailing colon defines it to be a 'label' as opposed to a 'variable' and causes a86 to adopt NASM−style semantics; so in a86, mov ax,var has different behaviour depending on whether var was declared as var: dw 0 (a label) or var dw 0 (a word−size variable). NASM is very simple by comparison: *everything* is a label.

NASM, in the interests of simplicity, also does not support the hybrid syntaxes supported by MASM and its clones, such as mov $ax,table[bx]$, where a memory reference is denoted by one portion outside square brackets and another portion inside. The correct syntax for the above is mov ax,[table+bx]. Likewise, mov ax,es:[di] is wrong and mov ax,[es:di] is right.

2.2.3 NASM Doesn't Store Variable Types

NASM, by design, chooses not to remember the types of variables you declare. Whereas MASM will remember, on seeing var dw 0, that you declared var as a word−size variable, and will then be able to fill in the ambiguity in the size of the instruction mov var,2, NASM will deliberately remember nothing about the symbol var except where it begins, and so you must explicitly code mov word [var],2.

For this reason, NASM doesn't support the LODS, MOVS, STOS, SCAS, CMPS, INS, or OUTS instructions, but only supports the forms such as LODSB, MOVSW, and SCASD, which explicitly specify the size of the components of the strings being manipulated.

2.2.4 NASM Doesn't ASSUME

As part of NASM's drive for simplicity, it also does not support the ASSUME directive. NASM will not keep track of what values you choose to put in your segment registers, and will never *automatically* generate a segment override prefix.

2.2.5 NASM Doesn't Support Memory Models

NASM also does not have any directives to support different 16−bit memory models. The programmer has to keep track of which functions are supposed to be called with a far call and which with a near call, and is responsible for putting the correct form of RET instruction (RETN or RETF; NASM accepts RET itself as an alternate form for RETN); in addition, the programmer is responsible for coding CALL FAR instructions where necessary when calling *external* functions, and must also keep track of which external variable definitions are far and which are near.

2.2.6 Floating−Point Differences

NASM uses different names to refer to floating−point registers from MASM: where MASM would call them $ST(0)$, $ST(1)$ and so on, and a86 would call them simply 0, 1 and so on, NASM chooses to call them st0, st1 etc.

As of version 0.96, NASM now treats the instructions with 'nowait' forms in the same way as MASM-compatible assemblers. The idiosyncratic treatment employed by 0.95 and earlier was based on a misunderstanding by the authors.

2.2.7 Other Differences

For historical reasons, NASM uses the keyword TWORD where MASM and compatible assemblers use TBYTE.

NASM does not declare uninitialized storage in the same way as MASM: where a MASM programmer might use stack db 64 dup (?), NASM requires stack resb 64, intended to be read as 'reserve 64 bytes'. For a limited amount of compatibility, since NASM treats ? as a valid character in symbol names, you can code ? equ 0 and then writing dw ? will at least do something vaguely useful. DUP is still not a supported syntax, however.

In addition to all of this, macros and directives work completely differently to MASM. See [chapter 4](#page-40-0) and [chapter 6](#page-75-0) for further details.

Chapter 3: The NASM Language

3.1 Layout of a NASM Source Line

Like most assemblers, each NASM source line contains (unless it is a macro, a preprocessor directive or an assembler directive: see [chapter 4](#page-40-0) and [chapter 6\)](#page-75-0) some combination of the four fields

label: instruction operands ; comment

As usual, most of these fields are optional; the presence or absence of any combination of a label, an instruction and a comment is allowed. Of course, the operand field is either required or forbidden by the presence and nature of the instruction field.

NASM uses backslash (\) as the line continuation character; if a line ends with backslash, the next line is considered to be a part of the backslash−ended line.

NASM places no restrictions on white space within a line: labels may have white space before them, or instructions may have no space before them, or anything. The colon after a label is also optional. (Note that this means that if you intend to code lodsb alone on a line, and type lodab by accident, then that's still a valid source line which does nothing but define a label. Running NASM with the command−line option −w+orphan−labels will cause it to warn you if you define a label alone on a line without a trailing colon.)

Valid characters in labels are letters, numbers, \Box , \Diamond , $\#$, \emptyset , \sim , ., and ?. The only characters which may be used as the *first* character of an identifier are letters, . (with special meaning: see [section 3.9\)](#page-38-0), _ and ?. An identifier may also be prefixed with a \$ to indicate that it is intended to be read as an identifier and not a reserved word; thus, if some other module you are linking with defines a symbol called eax, you can refer to \$eax in NASM code to distinguish the symbol from the register. Maximum length of an identifier is 4095 characters.

The instruction field may contain any machine instruction: Pentium and P6 instructions, FPU instructions, MMX instructions and even undocumented instructions are all supported. The instruction may be prefixed by LOCK, REP, REPE/REPZ or REPNE/REPNZ, in the usual way. Explicit address−size and operand−size prefixes A16, A32, A64, O16 and O32, O64 are provided – one example of their use is given in [chapter 10.](#page-121-0) You can also use the name of a segment register as an instruction prefix: coding es mov $[\text{bx}]$, ax is equivalent to coding mov $[es:bx]$, ax. We recommend the latter syntax, since it is consistent with other syntactic features of the language, but for instructions such as LODSB, which has no operands and yet can require a segment override, there is no clean syntactic way to proceed apart from es lodsb.

An instruction is not required to use a prefix: prefixes such as CS, A32, LOCK or REPE can appear on a line by themselves, and NASM will just generate the prefix bytes.

In addition to actual machine instructions, NASM also supports a number of pseudo−instructions, described in [section 3.2.](#page-29-0)

Instruction operands may take a number of forms: they can be registers, described simply by the register name (e.g. ax, bp, ebx, cr0: NASM does not use the gas–style syntax in which register names must be prefixed by a % sign), or they can be effective addresses (see [section 3.3\)](#page-31-0), constants [\(section 3.4\)](#page-32-0) or expressions [\(section 3.5\)](#page-35-1).

For x87 floating−point instructions, NASM accepts a wide range of syntaxes: you can use two−operand forms like MASM supports, or you can use NASM's native single−operand forms in most cases. For example, you can code:

```
fadd st1 ; this sets st0 := st0 + st1
fadd st0, st1 : so does this
fadd st1, st0 ; this sets st1 := st1 + st0fadd to st1 \qquad ; so does this
```
Almost any x87 floating−point instruction that references memory must use one of the prefixes DWORD, QWORD or TWORD to indicate what size of memory operand it refers to.

3.2 Pseudo−Instructions

Pseudo−instructions are things which, though not real x86 machine instructions, are used in the instruction field anyway because that's the most convenient place to put them. The current pseudo−instructions are DB, DW, DD, DQ, DT, DO and DY; their uninitialized counterparts RESB, RESW, RESD, RESQ, REST, RESO and RESY; the INCBIN command, the EQU command, and the TIMES prefix.

3.2.1 DB and Friends: Declaring Initialized Data

DB, DW, DD, DQ, DT, DO and DY are used, much as in MASM, to declare initialized data in the output file. They can be invoked in a wide range of ways:

DT, DO and DY do not accept numeric constants as operands.

3.2.2 RESB and Friends: Declaring Uninitialized Data

RESB, RESW, RESD, RESQ, REST, RESO and RESY are designed to be used in the BSS section of a module: they declare *uninitialized* storage space. Each takes a single operand, which is the number of bytes, words, doublewords or whatever to reserve. As stated in [section 2.2.7](#page-27-0), NASM does not support the MASM/TASM syntax of reserving uninitialized space by writing DW ? or similar things: this is what it does instead. The operand to a RESB–type pseudo−instruction is a *critical expression*: see [section 3.8](#page-37-1).

For example:

3.2.3 INCBIN: Including External Binary Files

INCBIN is borrowed from the old Amiga assembler DevPac: it includes a binary file verbatim into the output file. This can be handy for (for example) including graphics and sound data directly into a game executable file. It can be called in one of these three ways:

```
incbin "file.dat" ; include the whole file
incbin "file.dat", 1024 ; skip the first 1024 bytes
incbin "file.dat", 1024, 512 ; skip the first 1024, and
                             ; actually include at most 512
```
INCBIN is both a directive and a standard macro; the standard macro version searches for the file in the include file search path and adds the file to the dependency lists. This macro can be overridden if desired.

3.2.4 EQU: Defining Constants

EQU defines a symbol to a given constant value: when EQU is used, the source line must contain a label. The action of EQU is to define the given label name to the value of its (only) operand. This definition is absolute, and cannot change later. So, for example,

defines msglen to be the constant 12. msglen may not then be redefined later. This is not a preprocessor definition either: the value of msglen is evaluated *once*, using the value of \$ (see [section 3.5](#page-35-1) for an explanation of \$) at the point of definition, rather than being evaluated wherever it is referenced and using the value of $\frac{1}{2}$ at the point of reference.

3.2.5 TIMES: Repeating Instructions or Data

The TIMES prefix causes the instruction to be assembled multiple times. This is partly present as NASM's equivalent of the DUP syntax supported by MASM–compatible assemblers, in that you can code

zerobuf: times 64 db 0

or similar things; but TIMES is more versatile than that. The argument to TIMES is not just a numeric constant, but a numeric *expression*, so you can do things like

buffer: db 'hello, world' times 64−\$+buffer db ' '

which will store exactly enough spaces to make the total length of buffer up to 64. Finally, TIMES can be applied to ordinary instructions, so you can code trivial unrolled loops in it:

times 100 movsb

Note that there is no effective difference between times 100 resb 1 and resb 100, except that the latter will be assembled about 100 times faster due to the internal structure of the assembler.

The operand to TIMES is a critical expression [\(section 3.8\)](#page-37-1).

Note also that TIMES can't be applied to macros: the reason for this is that TIMES is processed after the macro phase, which allows the argument to TIMES to contain expressions such as 64−\$+buffer as above. To repeat more than one line of code, or a complex macro, use the preprocessor %rep directive.

3.3 Effective Addresses

An effective address is any operand to an instruction which references memory. Effective addresses, in NASM, have a very simple syntax: they consist of an expression evaluating to the desired address, enclosed in square brackets. For example:

Anything not conforming to this simple system is not a valid memory reference in NASM, for example es:wordvar[bx].

More complicated effective addresses, such as those involving more than one register, work in exactly the same way:

> mov eax,[ebx*2+ecx+offset] mov ax,[bp+di+8]

NASM is capable of doing algebra on these effective addresses, so that things which don't necessarily *look* legal are perfectly all right:

mov eax, [ebx*5] $\qquad \qquad$; assembles as [ebx*4+ebx] mov eax,[label1*2−label2] ; ie [label1+(label1−label2)]

Some forms of effective address have more than one assembled form; in most such cases NASM will generate the smallest form it can. For example, there are distinct assembled forms for the 32−bit effective addresses [eax*2+0] and [eax+eax], and NASM will generally generate the latter on the grounds that the former requires four bytes to store a zero offset.

NASM has a hinting mechanism which will cause [eax+ebx] and [ebx+eax] to generate different opcodes; this is occasionally useful because [esi+ebp] and [ebp+esi] have different default segment registers.

However, you can force NASM to generate an effective address in a particular form by the use of the keywords BYTE, WORD, DWORD and NOSPLIT. If you need [eax+3] to be assembled using a double−word offset field instead of the one byte NASM will normally generate, you can code [dword eax+3]. Similarly, you can force NASM to use a byte offset for a small value which it hasn't seen on the first pass (see [section 3.8](#page-37-1) for an example of such a code fragment) by using [byte eax+offset]. As special cases, [byte eax] will code [eax+0] with a byte offset of zero, and [dword eax] will code it with a double−word offset of zero. The normal form, [eax], will be coded with no offset field.

The form described in the previous paragraph is also useful if you are trying to access data in a 32−bit segment from within 16 bit code. For more information on this see the section on mixed–size addressing [\(section 10.2\)](#page-121-2). In particular, if you need to access data with a known offset that is larger than will fit in a 16−bit value, if you don't specify that it is a dword offset, nasm will cause the high word of the offset to be lost.

Similarly, NASM will split [eax*2] into [eax+eax] because that allows the offset field to be absent and space to be saved; in fact, it will also split [eax*2+offset] into [eax+eax+offset]. You can combat this behaviour by the use of the NOSPLIT keyword: [nosplit eax*2] will force [eax*2+0] to be generated literally.

In 64−bit mode, NASM will by default generate absolute addresses. The REL keyword makes it produce RIP–relative addresses. Since this is frequently the normally desired behaviour, see the DEFAULT directive [\(section 6.2\)](#page-76-1). The keyword ABS overrides REL.

3.4 Constants

NASM understands four different types of constant: numeric, character, string and floating−point.

3.4.1 Numeric Constants

A numeric constant is simply a number. NASM allows you to specify numbers in a variety of number bases, in a variety of ways: you can suffix H or X, D or T, Q or O, and B or Y for hexadecimal, decimal, octal and binary respectively, or you can prefix $0x$, for hexadecimal in the style of C, or you can prefix $\frac{1}{2}$ for hexadecimal in the style of Borland Pascal or Motorola Assemblers. Note, though, that the \$ prefix does double duty as a prefix on identifiers (see [section 3.1](#page-28-1)), so a hex number prefixed with a $\frac{1}{2}$ sign must have a digit after the \$ rather than a letter. In addition, current versions of NASM accept the prefix 0h for hexadecimal, 0d or 0t for decimal, 0o or 0q for octal, and 0b or 0y for binary. Please note that unlike C, a 0 prefix by itself does *not* imply an octal constant!

Numeric constants can have underscores (_) interspersed to break up long strings.

Some examples (all producing exactly the same code):

3.4.2 Character Strings

A character string consists of up to eight characters enclosed in either single quotes ('...'), double quotes $("...")$ or backquotes $('...')$. Single or double quotes are equivalent to NASM (except of course that surrounding the constant with single quotes allows double quotes to appear within it and vice versa); the contents of those are represented verbatim. Strings enclosed in backquotes support C−style \–escapes for special characters.

The following escape sequences are recognized by backquoted strings:

\' single quote (')
\" double quote (") \" double quote (")
\' backquote (') backquote (')

All other escape sequences are reserved. Note that \setminus 0, meaning a NUL character (ASCII 0), is a special case of the octal escape sequence.

Unicode characters specified with \u or \U are converted to UTF−8. For example, the following lines are all equivalent:

3.4.3 Character Constants

A character constant consists of a string up to eight bytes long, used in an expression context. It is treated as if it was an integer.

A character constant with more than one byte will be arranged with little−endian order in mind: if you code

```
 mov eax,'abcd'
```
then the constant generated is not 0x61626364, but 0x64636261, so that if you were then to store the value into memory, it would read abcd rather than dcba. This is also the sense of character constants understood by the Pentium's CPUID instruction.

3.4.4 String Constants

String constants are character strings used in the context of some pseudo−instructions, namely the DB family and INCBIN (where it represents a filename.) They are also used in certain preprocessor directives.

A string constant looks like a character constant, only longer. It is treated as a concatenation of maximum−size character constants for the conditions. So the following are equivalent:

And the following are also equivalent:

Note that when used in a string–supporting context, quoted strings are treated as a string constants even if they are short enough to be a character constant, because otherwise db 'ab' would have the same effect as db 'a', which would be silly. Similarly, three−character or four−character constants are treated as strings when they are operands to DW, and so forth.

3.4.5 Unicode Strings

The special operators __utf16__, __utf16le__, __utf16be__, __utf32__, __utf32le__ and __utf32be__ allows definition of Unicode strings. They take a string in UTF−8 format and converts it to UTF−16 or UTF−32, respectively. Unless the be forms are specified, the output is littleendian.

For example:

```
%define u(x) __utfl6_(x)
\text{define } w(x) \text{ [}u\text{tf32}](x) dw u('C:\WINDOWS'), 0 ; Pathname in UTF−16 
       dd w('A + B = \u206a'), 0 ; String in UTF−32
```
The UTF operators can be applied either to strings passed to the DB family instructions, or to character constants in an expression context.

3.4.6 Floating−Point Constants

Floating−point constants are acceptable only as arguments to DB, DW, DD, DQ, DT, and DO, or as arguments to the special operators $_f$ float8__, $_f$ loat16__, $_f$ loat32__, $_f$ loat64__, $_f$ loat80m__, __float80e__, __float128l__, and __float128h__.

Floating−point constants are expressed in the traditional form: digits, then a period, then optionally more digits, then optionally an E followed by an exponent. The period is mandatory, so that NASM can distinguish between dd 1, which declares an integer constant, and dd 1.0 which declares a floating−point constant.

NASM also support C99−style hexadecimal floating−point: 0x, hexadecimal digits, period, optionally more hexadeximal digits, then optionally a P followed by a *binary* (not hexadecimal) exponent in decimal notation. As an extension, NASM additionally supports the 0h and \$ prefixes for hexadecimal, as well binary and octal floating−point, using the 0b or 0y and 0o or 0q prefixes, respectively.

Underscores to break up groups of digits are permitted in floating−point constants as well.

Some examples:

The 8−bit "quarter−precision" floating−point format is sign:exponent:mantissa = 1:4:3 with an exponent bias of 7. This appears to be the most frequently used 8−bit floating−point format, although it is not covered by any formal standard. This is sometimes called a "minifloat."

The special operators are used to produce floating−point numbers in other contexts. They produce the binary representation of a specific floating−point number as an integer, and can use anywhere integer constants are used in an expression. __float80m__ and __float80e__ produce the 64−bit mantissa and 16−bit exponent of an 80−bit floating−point number, and __float128l__ and __float128h__ produce the lower and upper 64−bit halves of a 128−bit floating−point number, respectively.

For example:

mov rax, float64 (3.141592653589793238462)

... would assign the binary representation of pi as a 64−bit floating point number into RAX. This is exactly equivalent to:

mov rax,0x400921fb54442d18

NASM cannot do compile−time arithmetic on floating−point constants. This is because NASM is designed to be portable – although it always generates code to run on x86 processors, the assembler itself can run on any system with an ANSI C compiler. Therefore, the assembler cannot guarantee the presence of a floating−point unit capable of handling the Intel number formats, and so for NASM to be able to do floating arithmetic it would have to include its own complete set of floating−point routines, which would significantly increase the size of the assembler for very little benefit.

The special tokens __Infinity__, __QNaN__ (or __NaN__) and __SNaN__ can be used to generate infinities, quiet NaNs, and signalling NaNs, respectively. These are normally used as macros:

```
%define Inf __ Infinity
%define NaN ___ONaN
      dq +1.5, −Inf, NaN ; Double−precision constants
```
The %use fp standard macro package contains a set of convenience macros. See [section 5.3.](#page-74-0)

3.4.7 Packed BCD Constants

x87−style packed BCD constants can be used in the same contexts as 80−bit floating−point numbers. They are suffixed with p or prefixed with 0p, and can include up to 18 decimal digits.

As with other numeric constants, underscores can be used to separate digits.

For example:

```
 dt 12_345_678_901_245_678p 
 dt −12_345_678_901_245_678p 
 dt +0p33 
 dt 33p
```
3.5 Expressions

Expressions in NASM are similar in syntax to those in C. Expressions are evaluated as 64−bit integers which are then adjusted to the appropriate size.

NASM supports two special tokens in expressions, allowing calculations to involve the current assembly position: the \$ and \$\$ tokens. \$ evaluates to the assembly position at the beginning of the line containing the
expression; so you can code an infinite loop using JMP $\frac{1}{2}$. $\frac{1}{2}$ evaluates to the beginning of the current section; so you can tell how far into the section you are by using (\$–\$\$).

The arithmetic operators provided by NASM are listed here, in increasing order of precedence.

3.5.1 |: Bitwise OR Operator

The | operator gives a bitwise OR, exactly as performed by the OR machine instruction. Bitwise OR is the lowest−priority arithmetic operator supported by NASM.

3.5.2 ^: Bitwise XOR Operator

^ provides the bitwise XOR operation.

3.5.3 &: Bitwise AND Operator

& provides the bitwise AND operation.

3.5.4 << and >>: Bit Shift Operators

<< gives a bit−shift to the left, just as it does in C. So 5<<3 evaluates to 5 times 8, or 40. >> gives a bit−shift to the right; in NASM, such a shift is *always* unsigned, so that the bits shifted in from the left−hand end are filled with zero rather than a sign−extension of the previous highest bit.

3.5.5 + and −: Addition and Subtraction Operators

The + and − operators do perfectly ordinary addition and subtraction.

3.5.6 *, /, //, % and %%: Multiplication and Division

* is the multiplication operator. / and // are both division operators: / is unsigned division and // is signed division. Similarly, % and %% provide unsigned and signed modulo operators respectively.

NASM, like ANSI C, provides no guarantees about the sensible operation of the signed modulo operator.

Since the % character is used extensively by the macro preprocessor, you should ensure that both the signed and unsigned modulo operators are followed by white space wherever they appear.

3.5.7 Unary Operators: +, −, ~, ! and SEG

The highest−priority operators in NASM's expression grammar are those which only apply to one argument. − negates its operand, + does nothing (it's provided for symmetry with −), ~ computes the one's complement of its operand, ! is the logical negation operator, and SEG provides the segment address of its operand (explained in more detail in [section 3.6\)](#page-36-0).

3.6 SEG and WRT

When writing large 16−bit programs, which must be split into multiple segments, it is often necessary to be able to refer to the segment part of the address of a symbol. NASM supports the SEG operator to perform this function.

The SEG operator returns the *preferred* segment base of a symbol, defined as the segment base relative to which the offset of the symbol makes sense. So the code

will load $ES:BX$ with a valid pointer to the symbol symbol.

Things can be more complex than this: since 16−bit segments and groups may overlap, you might occasionally want to refer to some symbol using a different segment base from the preferred one. NASM lets you do this, by the use of the WRT (With Reference To) keyword. So you can do things like

> mov ax, weird seg \qquad ; weird seg is a segment base mov es,ax mov bx,symbol wrt weird_seg

to load $ES:BX$ with a different, but functionally equivalent, pointer to the symbol symbol.

NASM supports far (inter−segment) calls and jumps by means of the syntax call segment:offset, where segment and offset both represent immediate values. So to call a far procedure, you could code either of

> call (seg procedure):procedure call weird seg: (procedure wrt weird seg)

(The parentheses are included for clarity, to show the intended parsing of the above instructions. They are not necessary in practice.)

NASM supports the syntax call far procedure as a synonym for the first of the above usages. JMP works identically to CALL in these examples.

To declare a far pointer to a data item in a data segment, you must code

dw symbol, seg symbol

NASM supports no convenient synonym for this, though you can always invent one using the macro processor.

3.7 STRICT: Inhibiting Optimization

When assembling with the optimizer set to level 2 or higher (see [section 2.1.22\)](#page-23-0), NASM will use size specifiers (BYTE, WORD, DWORD, QWORD, TWORD, OWORD or YWORD), but will give them the smallest possible size. The keyword STRICT can be used to inhibit optimization and force a particular operand to be emitted in the specified size. For example, with the optimizer on, and in BITS 16 mode,

```
 push dword 33
```
is encoded in three bytes 66 6A 21, whereas

push strict dword 33

is encoded in six bytes, with a full dword immediate operand 66 68 21 00 00 00.

With the optimizer off, the same code (six bytes) is generated whether the STRICT keyword was used or not.

3.8 Critical Expressions

Although NASM has an optional multi−pass optimizer, there are some expressions which must be resolvable on the first pass. These are called *Critical Expressions*.

The first pass is used to determine the size of all the assembled code and data, so that the second pass, when generating all the code, knows all the symbol addresses the code refers to. So one thing NASM can't handle is code whose size depends on the value of a symbol declared after the code in question. For example,

 times (label−\$) db 0 label: db 'Where am I?'

The argument to TIMES in this case could equally legally evaluate to anything at all; NASM will reject this example because it cannot tell the size of the TIMES line when it first sees it. It will just as firmly reject the slightly paradoxical code

 times (label−\$+1) db 0 label: db 'NOW where am I?'

in which *any* value for the TIMES argument is by definition wrong!

NASM rejects these examples by means of a concept called a *critical expression*, which is defined to be an expression whose value is required to be computable in the first pass, and which must therefore depend only on symbols defined before it. The argument to the TIMES prefix is a critical expression.

3.9 Local Labels

NASM gives special treatment to symbols beginning with a period. A label beginning with a single period is treated as a *local* label, which means that it is associated with the previous non−local label. So, for example:

```
label1 ; some code
.loop 
         ; some more code 
         jne .loop 
         ret 
label2 ; some code 
.loop 
         ; some more code 
         jne .loop 
         ret
```
In the above code fragment, each JNE instruction jumps to the line immediately before it, because the two definitions of .loop are kept separate by virtue of each being associated with the previous non−local label.

This form of local label handling is borrowed from the old Amiga assembler DevPac; however, NASM goes one step further, in allowing access to local labels from other parts of the code. This is achieved by means of *defining* a local label in terms of the previous non–local label: the first definition of .loop above is really defining a symbol called label1.loop, and the second defines a symbol called label2.loop. So, if you really needed to, you could write

```
label3 ; some more code
         ; and some more 
         jmp label1.loop
```
Sometimes it is useful – in a macro, for instance – to be able to define a label which can be referenced from anywhere but which doesn't interfere with the normal local−label mechanism. Such a label can't be non−local because it would interfere with subsequent definitions of, and references to, local labels; and it can't be local

because the macro that defined it wouldn't know the label's full name. NASM therefore introduces a third type of label, which is probably only useful in macro definitions: if a label begins with the special prefix ..@, then it does nothing to the local label mechanism. So you could code

```
label1: ; a non−local label 
.local: \qquad \qquad ; this is really labell.local
..@foo: \qquad \qquad ; this is a special symbol
label2: ; another non−local label 
.local: \qquad \qquad ; this is really label2.local
       jmp ..@foo ; this will jump three lines up
```
NASM has the capacity to define other special symbols beginning with a double period: for example, ..start is used to specify the entry point in the obj output format (see [section 7.4.6\)](#page-86-0), ..imagebase is used to find out the offset from a base address of the current image in the win64 output format (see [section](#page-90-0) [7.6.1\)](#page-90-0). So just keep in mind that symbols beginning with a double period are special.

Chapter 4: The NASM Preprocessor

NASM contains a powerful macro processor, which supports conditional assembly, multi−level file inclusion, two forms of macro (single−line and multi−line), and a 'context stack' mechanism for extra macro power. Preprocessor directives all begin with a % sign.

The preprocessor collapses all lines which end with a backslash (\) character into a single line. Thus:

%define THIS VERY LONG MACRO NAME IS DEFINED TO \ THIS VALUE

will work like a single−line macro without the backslash−newline sequence.

4.1 Single−Line Macros

4.1.1 The Normal Way: %define

Single−line macros are defined using the %define preprocessor directive. The definitions work in a similar way to C; so you can do things like

```
%define ctrl 0x1F & 
\texttt{define param}(a,b) ((a)+(a)*(b))
```
mov byte [param(2,ebx)], ctrl 'D'

which will expand to

mov byte $[(2)+(2)*(ebx)]$, $0x1F$ & 'D'

When the expansion of a single−line macro contains tokens which invoke another macro, the expansion is performed at invocation time, not at definition time. Thus the code

```
\deltadefine a(x) 1+b(x)
\deltadefine b(x) 2 \star x mov ax,a(8)
```
will evaluate in the expected way to mov $ax, 1+2*8$, even though the macro b wasn't defined at the time of definition of a.

Macros defined with %define are case sensitive: after %define foo bar, only foo will expand to bar: Foo or FOO will not. By using %idefine instead of %define (the 'i' stands for 'insensitive') you can define all the case variants of a macro at once, so that %idefine foo bar would cause foo, Foo, FOO, fOO and so on all to expand to bar.

There is a mechanism which detects when a macro call has occurred as a result of a previous expansion of the same macro, to guard against circular references and infinite loops. If this happens, the preprocessor will only expand the first occurrence of the macro. Hence, if you code

 δ define $a(x)$ 1+a(x)

 mov $ax, a(3)$

the macro $a(3)$ will expand once, becoming $1+a(3)$, and will then expand no further. This behaviour can be useful: see [section 9.1](#page-113-0) for an example of its use.

You can overload single−line macros: if you write

 δ define foo (x) 1+x %define foo(x,y) 1+x*y

the preprocessor will be able to handle both types of macro call, by counting the parameters you pass; so foo(3) will become $1+3$ whereas foo(ebx, 2) will become $1+\text{ebx}*2$. However, if you define

%define foo bar

then no other definition of foo will be accepted: a macro with no parameters prohibits the definition of the same name as a macro *with* parameters, and vice versa.

This doesn't prevent single−line macros being *redefined*: you can perfectly well define a macro with

%define foo bar

and then re−define it later in the same source file with

%define foo baz

Then everywhere the macro foo is invoked, it will be expanded according to the most recent definition. This is particularly useful when defining single−line macros with %assign (see [section 4.1.7\)](#page-43-0).

You can pre−define single−line macros using the '−d' option on the NASM command line: see [section 2.1.18.](#page-22-0)

4.1.2 Resolving %define: %xdefine

To have a reference to an embedded single−line macro resolved at the time that the embedding macro is *defined*, as opposed to when the embedding macro is *expanded*, you need a different mechanism to the one offered by %define. The solution is to use %xdefine, or it's case−insensitive counterpart %ixdefine.

Suppose you have the following code:

%define isTrue 1 %define isFalse isTrue %define isTrue 0 val1: db isFalse %define isTrue 1 val2: db isFalse

In this case, val1 is equal to 0, and val2 is equal to 1. This is because, when a single−line macro is defined using %define, it is expanded only when it is called. As isFalse expands to isTrue, the expansion will be the current value of isTrue. The first time it is called that is 0, and the second time it is 1.

If you wanted isFalse to expand to the value assigned to the embedded macro isTrue at the time that isFalse was defined, you need to change the above code to use %xdefine.

```
%xdefine isTrue 1 
%xdefine isFalse isTrue 
%xdefine isTrue 0 
val1: db isFalse 
%xdefine isTrue 1 
val2: db isFalse
```
Now, each time that isFalse is called, it expands to 1, as that is what the embedded macro isTrue expanded to at the time that isFalse was defined.

4.1.3 Macro Indirection: %[...]

The %[...] construct can be used to expand macros in contexts where macro expansion would otherwise not occur, including in the names other macros. For example, if you have a set of macros named Foo16, Foo32 and Foo64, you could write:

mov ax,Foo%[__BITS__] ; The Foo value

to use the builtin macro __BITS__ (see [section 4.12.5\)](#page-67-0) to automatically select between them. Similarly, the two statements:

%xdefine Bar (Quux ; Expands due to %xdefine %define Bar %[Quux] ; Expands due to $\S[...]$

have, in fact, exactly the same effect.

%[...] concatenates to adjacent tokens in the same way that multi−line macro parameters do, see [section](#page-51-0) [4.3.9](#page-51-0) for details.

4.1.4 Concatenating Single Line Macro Tokens: %+

Individual tokens in single line macros can be concatenated, to produce longer tokens for later processing. This can be useful if there are several similar macros that perform similar functions.

Please note that a space is required after $*+$, in order to disambiguate it from the syntax $*+1$ used in multiline macros.

As an example, consider the following:

Now, if we need to access the elements of tBIOSDA in different places, we can end up with:

 mov ax,BDASTART + tBIOSDA.COM1addr mov bx,BDASTART + tBIOSDA.COM2addr

This will become pretty ugly (and tedious) if used in many places, and can be reduced in size significantly by using the following macro:

; Macro to access BIOS variables by their names (from tBDA):

%define BDA(x) BDASTART + tBIOSDA. %+ x

Now the above code can be written as:

 mov ax,BDA(COM1addr) mov bx,BDA(COM2addr)

Using this feature, we can simplify references to a lot of macros (and, in turn, reduce typing errors).

4.1.5 The Macro Name Itself: %? and %??

The special symbols %? and %?? can be used to reference the macro name itself inside a macro expansion, this is supported for both single−and multi−line macros. %? refers to the macro name as *invoked*, whereas %?? refers to the macro name as *declared*. The two are always the same for case−sensitive macros, but for case−insensitive macros, they can differ.

For example:

%idefine Foo mov %?,%??

 foo FOO

will expand to:

 mov foo,Foo mov FOO,Foo

The sequence:

%idefine keyword \$%?

can be used to make a keyword "disappear", for example in case a new instruction has been used as a label in older code. For example:

%idefine pause \$%? ; Hide the PAUSE instruction

4.1.6 Undefining Single−Line Macros: %undef

Single−line macros can be removed with the %undef directive. For example, the following sequence:

%define foo bar %undef foo

mov eax, foo

will expand to the instruction mov eax, foo, since after $%$ sundef the macro foo is no longer defined.

Macros that would otherwise be pre−defined can be undefined on the command−line using the '−u' option on the NASM command line: see [section 2.1.19.](#page-22-1)

4.1.7 Preprocessor Variables: %assign

An alternative way to define single−line macros is by means of the %assign command (and its case−insensitive counterpart %iassign, which differs from %assign in exactly the same way that %idefine differs from %define).

%assign is used to define single−line macros which take no parameters and have a numeric value. This value can be specified in the form of an expression, and it will be evaluated once, when the %assign directive is processed.

Like %define, macros defined using %assign can be re−defined later, so you can do things like

%assign i i+1

to increment the numeric value of a macro.

%assign is useful for controlling the termination of %rep preprocessor loops: see [section 4.5](#page-57-0) for an example of this. Another use for %assign is given in [section 8.4](#page-104-0) and [section 9.1.](#page-113-0)

The expression passed to %assign is a critical expression (see [section 3.8\)](#page-37-0), and must also evaluate to a pure number (rather than a relocatable reference such as a code or data address, or anything involving a register).

4.1.8 Defining Strings: %defstr

%defstr, and its case−insensitive counterpart %idefstr, define or redefine a single−line macro without parameters but converts the entire right−hand side, after macro expansion, to a quoted string before definition.

For example:

%defstr test TEST

is equivalent to

%define test 'TEST'

This can be used, for example, with the $\frac{1}{6}$! construct (see [section 4.10.2\)](#page-66-0):

%defstr PATH %!PATH : 7 The operating system PATH variable

4.1.9 Defining Tokens: %deftok

%deftok, and its case−insensitive counterpart %ideftok, define or redefine a single−line macro without parameters but converts the second parameter, after string conversion, to a sequence of tokens.

For example:

%deftok test 'TEST'

is equivalent to

%define test TEST

4.2 String Manipulation in Macros

It's often useful to be able to handle strings in macros. NASM supports a few simple string handling macro operators from which more complex operations can be constructed.

All the string operators define or redefine a value (either a string or a numeric value) to a single−line macro. When producing a string value, it may change the style of quoting of the input string or strings, and possibly use \–escapes inside '–quoted strings.

4.2.1 Concatenating Strings: %strcat

The %strcat operator concatenates quoted strings and assign them to a single−line macro.

For example:

%strcat alpha "Alpha: ", '12" screen'

... would assign the value 'Alpha: 12" screen' to alpha. Similarly:

%strcat beta '"foo"\', "'bar'"

... would assign the value '"foo"\\'bar'' to beta.

The use of commas to separate strings is permitted but optional.

4.2.2 String Length: %strlen

The %strlen operator assigns the length of a string to a macro. For example:

%strlen charcnt 'my string'

In this example, charcnt would receive the value 9, just as if an %assign had been used. In this example, 'my string' was a literal string but it could also have been a single−line macro that expands to a string, as in the following example:

%define sometext 'my string' %strlen charcnt sometext

As in the first case, this would result in charcnt being assigned the value of 9.

4.2.3 Extracting Substrings: %substr

Individual letters or substrings in strings can be extracted using the %substr operator. An example of its use is probably more useful than the description:

```
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 1 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'x' 
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 2 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'y' 
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 3 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'z' 
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 2,2 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'yz' 
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 2,−1 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'yzw' 
%substr mychar 'xyzw' 2,−2 ; equivalent to %define mychar 'yz'
```
As with %strlen (see [section 4.2.2\)](#page-45-0), the first parameter is the single−line macro to be created and the second is the string. The third parameter specifies the first character to be selected, and the optional fourth parameter preceeded by comma) is the length. Note that the first index is 1, not 0 and the last index is equal to the value that %strlen would assign given the same string. Index values out of range result in an empty string. A negative length means "until N−1 characters before the end of string", i.e. −1 means until end of string, −2 until one character before, etc.

4.3 Multi−Line Macros: %macro

Multi−line macros are much more like the type of macro seen in MASM and TASM: a multi−line macro definition in NASM looks something like this.

%macro prologue 1

 push ebp mov ebp,esp sub esp,%1

%endmacro

This defines a C−like function prologue as a macro: so you would invoke the macro with a call such as

myfunc: prologue 12

which would expand to the three lines of code

myfunc: push ebp mov ebp,esp sub esp,12

The number 1 after the macro name in the %macro line defines the number of parameters the macro prologue expects to receive. The use of %1 inside the macro definition refers to the first parameter to the macro call. With a macro taking more than one parameter, subsequent parameters would be referred to as %2, %3 and so on.

Multi−line macros, like single−line macros, are case−sensitive, unless you define them using the alternative directive %imacro.

If you need to pass a comma as *part* of a parameter to a multi−line macro, you can do that by enclosing the entire parameter in braces. So you could code things like

%macro silly 2

%2: db %1

%endmacro

4.3.1 Overloading Multi−Line Macros

As with single−line macros, multi−line macros can be overloaded by defining the same macro name several times with different numbers of parameters. This time, no exception is made for macros with no parameters at all. So you could define

%macro prologue 0

 push ebp mov ebp,esp

%endmacro

to define an alternative form of the function prologue which allocates no local stack space.

Sometimes, however, you might want to 'overload' a machine instruction; for example, you might want to define

%macro push 2

 push %1 push %2

%endmacro

so that you could code

Ordinarily, NASM will give a warning for the first of the above two lines, since push is now defined to be a macro, and is being invoked with a number of parameters for which no definition has been given. The correct code will still be generated, but the assembler will give a warning. This warning can be disabled by the use of the −w−macro−params command−line option (see [section 2.1.24\)](#page-23-1).

4.3.2 Macro−Local Labels

NASM allows you to define labels within a multi−line macro definition in such a way as to make them local to the macro call: so calling the same macro multiple times will use a different label each time. You do this by prefixing %% to the label name. So you can invent an instruction which executes a RET if the Z flag is set by doing this:

```
%macro retz 0 
          jnz %%skip 
         ret 
     %%skip:
```
%endmacro

You can call this macro as many times as you want, and every time you call it NASM will make up a different 'real' name to substitute for the label %%skip. The names NASM invents are of the form ..@2345.skip, where the number 2345 changes with every macro call. The ..@ prefix prevents macro−local labels from interfering with the local label mechanism, as described in [section 3.9.](#page-38-0) You should avoid defining your own labels in this form (the . . @ prefix, then a number, then another period) in case they interfere with macro−local labels.

4.3.3 Greedy Macro Parameters

Occasionally it is useful to define a macro which lumps its entire command line into one parameter definition, possibly after extracting one or two smaller parameters from the front. An example might be a macro to write a text string to a file in MS−DOS, where you might want to be able to write

writefile [filehandle],"hello, world",13,10

NASM allows you to define the last parameter of a macro to be *greedy*, meaning that if you invoke the macro with more parameters than it expects, all the spare parameters get lumped into the last defined one along with the separating commas. So if you code:

```
%macro writefile 2+ 
       jmp %%endstr
  %%str: db %2 
  %%endstr: 
       mov dx,%%str 
       mov cx,%%endstr−%%str 
       mov bx,%1 
       mov ah,0x40 
        int 0x21
```
%endmacro

then the example call to writefile above will work as expected: the text before the first comma, [filehandle], is used as the first macro parameter and expanded when %1 is referred to, and all the subsequent text is lumped into %2 and placed after the db.

The greedy nature of the macro is indicated to NASM by the use of the + sign after the parameter count on the %macro line.

If you define a greedy macro, you are effectively telling NASM how it should expand the macro given *any* number of parameters from the actual number specified up to infinity; in this case, for example, NASM now knows what to do when it sees a call to writefile with 2, 3, 4 or more parameters. NASM will take this into account when overloading macros, and will not allow you to define another form of writefile taking 4 parameters (for example).

Of course, the above macro could have been implemented as a non−greedy macro, in which case the call to it would have had to look like

writefile [filehandle], {"hello, world",13,10}

NASM provides both mechanisms for putting commas in macro parameters, and you choose which one you prefer for each macro definition.

See [section 6.3.1](#page-76-0) for a better way to write the above macro.

4.3.4 Macro Parameters Range

NASM allows you to expand parameters via special construction $\{\{x: y\} \}$ where x is the first parameter index and y is the last. Any index can be either negative or positive but must never be zero.

For example

```
%macro mpar 1−* 
     db \{3:5\}%endmacro
```
mpar 1,2,3,4,5,6

expands to 3, 4, 5 range.

Even more, the parameters can be reversed so that

```
%macro mpar 1−* 
      db %{5:3} 
%endmacro
```
mpar 1,2,3,4,5,6

expands to $5, 4, 3$ range.

But even this is not the last. The parameters can be addressed via negative indices so NASM will count them reversed. The ones who know Python may see the analogue here.

```
%macro mpar 1−* 
      db %{−1:−3} 
%endmacro
```
mpar 1,2,3,4,5,6

expands to $6, 5, 4$ range.

Note that NASM uses comma to separate parameters being expanded.

By the way, here is a trick – you might use the index $\{ -1:-1 \}$ which gives you the last argument passed to a macro.

4.3.5 Default Macro Parameters

NASM also allows you to define a multi−line macro with a *range* of allowable parameter counts. If you do this, you can specify defaults for omitted parameters. So, for example:

%macro die 0−1 "Painful program death has occurred."

```
 writefile 2,%1 
 mov ax,0x4c01 
 int 0x21
```
%endmacro

This macro (which makes use of the writefile macro defined in [section 4.3.3](#page-47-0)) can be called with an explicit error message, which it will display on the error output stream before exiting, or it can be called with no parameters, in which case it will use the default error message supplied in the macro definition.

In general, you supply a minimum and maximum number of parameters for a macro of this type; the minimum number of parameters are then required in the macro call, and then you provide defaults for the optional ones. So if a macro definition began with the line

%macro foobar 1−3 eax,[ebx+2]

then it could be called with between one and three parameters, and %1 would always be taken from the macro call. %2, if not specified by the macro call, would default to eax, and %3 if not specified would default to [ebx+2].

You can provide extra information to a macro by providing too many default parameters:

%macro quux 1 something

This will trigger a warning by default; see [section 2.1.24](#page-23-1) for more information. When quux is invoked, it receives not one but two parameters. something can be referred to as %2. The difference between passing something this way and writing something in the macro body is that with this way something is evaluated when the macro is defined, not when it is expanded.

You may omit parameter defaults from the macro definition, in which case the parameter default is taken to be blank. This can be useful for macros which can take a variable number of parameters, since the %0 token (see [section 4.3.6\)](#page-50-0) allows you to determine how many parameters were really passed to the macro call.

This defaulting mechanism can be combined with the greedy−parameter mechanism; so the die macro above could be made more powerful, and more useful, by changing the first line of the definition to

%macro die 0−1+ "Painful program death has occurred.",13,10

The maximum parameter count can be infinite, denoted by $*$. In this case, of course, it is impossible to provide a *full* set of default parameters. Examples of this usage are shown in [section 4.3.8.](#page-50-1)

4.3.6 %0: Macro Parameter Counter

The parameter reference %0 will return a numeric constant giving the number of parameters received, that is, if %0 is n then %n is the last parameter. %0 is mostly useful for macros that can take a variable number of parameters. It can be used as an argument to %rep (see [section 4.5\)](#page-57-0) in order to iterate through all the parameters of a macro. Examples are given in [section 4.3.8.](#page-50-1)

4.3.7 %00: Label Preceeding Macro

%00 will return the label preceeding the macro invocation, if any. The label must be on the same line as the macro invocation, may be a local label (see [section 3.9\)](#page-38-0), and need not end in a colon.

4.3.8 %rotate: Rotating Macro Parameters

Unix shell programmers will be familiar with the shift shell command, which allows the arguments passed to a shell script (referenced as \$1, \$2 and so on) to be moved left by one place, so that the argument previously referenced as \$2 becomes available as \$1, and the argument previously referenced as \$1 is no longer available at all.

NASM provides a similar mechanism, in the form of %rotate. As its name suggests, it differs from the Unix shift in that no parameters are lost: parameters rotated off the left end of the argument list reappear on the right, and vice versa.

%rotate is invoked with a single numeric argument (which may be an expression). The macro parameters are rotated to the left by that many places. If the argument to %rotate is negative, the macro parameters are rotated to the right.

So a pair of macros to save and restore a set of registers might work as follows:

```
%macro multipush 1−* 
   %rep %0 
         push %1 
   %rotate 1 
   %endrep
```
%endmacro

This macro invokes the PUSH instruction on each of its arguments in turn, from left to right. It begins by pushing its first argument, %1, then invokes %rotate to move all the arguments one place to the left, so that the original second argument is now available as %1. Repeating this procedure as many times as there were arguments (achieved by supplying %0 as the argument to %rep) causes each argument in turn to be pushed.

Note also the use of $*$ as the maximum parameter count, indicating that there is no upper limit on the number of parameters you may supply to the multipush macro.

It would be convenient, when using this macro, to have a POP equivalent, which *didn't* require the arguments to be given in reverse order. Ideally, you would write the multipush macro call, then cut−and−paste the line to where the pop needed to be done, and change the name of the called macro to multipop, and the macro would take care of popping the registers in the opposite order from the one in which they were pushed.

This can be done by the following definition:

```
%macro multipop 1−*
```

```
 %rep %0 
 %rotate −1 
        pop %1 
 %endrep
```
%endmacro

This macro begins by rotating its arguments one place to the *right*, so that the original *last* argument appears as %1. This is then popped, and the arguments are rotated right again, so the second−to−last argument becomes %1. Thus the arguments are iterated through in reverse order.

4.3.9 Concatenating Macro Parameters

NASM can concatenate macro parameters and macro indirection constructs on to other text surrounding them. This allows you to declare a family of symbols, for example, in a macro definition. If, for example, you wanted to generate a table of key codes along with offsets into the table, you could code something like

%macro keytab_entry 2

 keypos%1 equ \$−keytab db $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ %endmacro keytab: keytab_entry F1,128+1 keytab_entry F2,128+2 keytab_entry Return,13 which would expand to keytab: keyposF1 equ \$−keytab db 128+1 keyposF2 equ \$−keytab db 128+2

keyposReturn equ \$−keytab

db 13

You can just as easily concatenate text on to the other end of a macro parameter, by writing $\$1$ foo.

If you need to append a *digit* to a macro parameter, for example defining labels foo1 and foo2 when passed the parameter foo, you can't code %11 because that would be taken as the eleventh macro parameter. Instead, you must code $\frac{1}{1}1$, which will separate the first 1 (giving the number of the macro parameter) from the second (literal text to be concatenated to the parameter).

This concatenation can also be applied to other preprocessor in−line objects, such as macro−local labels [\(section 4.3.2\)](#page-47-1) and context−local labels [\(section 4.7.2\)](#page-59-0). In all cases, ambiguities in syntax can be resolved by enclosing everything after the $\frac{1}{6}$ sign and before the literal text in braces: so $\frac{1}{6}$ foo $\bar{\rm bar}$ concatenates the text bar to the end of the real name of the macro−local label %%foo. (This is unnecessary, since the form NASM uses for the real names of macro–local labels means that the two usages %{%foo}bar and %%foobar would both expand to the same thing anyway; nevertheless, the capability is there.)

The single−line macro indirection construct, %[...] [\(section 4.1.3\)](#page-42-0), behaves the same way as macro parameters for the purpose of concatenation.

See also the $*$ - operator, [section 4.1.4.](#page-42-1)

4.3.10 Condition Codes as Macro Parameters

NASM can give special treatment to a macro parameter which contains a condition code. For a start, you can refer to the macro parameter %1 by means of the alternative syntax %+1, which informs NASM that this macro parameter is supposed to contain a condition code, and will cause the preprocessor to report an error message if the macro is called with a parameter which is *not* a valid condition code.

Far more usefully, though, you can refer to the macro parameter by means of %−1, which NASM will expand as the *inverse* condition code. So the retz macro defined in [section 4.3.2](#page-47-1) can be replaced by a general conditional−return macro like this:

```
%macro retc 1 
         j%−1 %%skip 
         ret 
   %%skip:
```
%endmacro

This macro can now be invoked using calls like retc ne, which will cause the conditional−jump instruction in the macro expansion to come out as JE, or retc po which will make the jump a JPE.

The %+1 macro−parameter reference is quite happy to interpret the arguments CXZ and ECXZ as valid condition codes; however, %−1 will report an error if passed either of these, because no inverse condition code exists.

4.3.11 Disabling Listing Expansion

When NASM is generating a listing file from your program, it will generally expand multi−line macros by means of writing the macro call and then listing each line of the expansion. This allows you to see which instructions in the macro expansion are generating what code; however, for some macros this clutters the listing up unnecessarily.

NASM therefore provides the .nolist qualifier, which you can include in a macro definition to inhibit the expansion of the macro in the listing file. The .nolist qualifier comes directly after the number of parameters, like this:

```
%macro foo 1.nolist
Or like this:
%macro bar 1−5+.nolist a,b,c,d,e,f,g,h
```
4.3.12 Undefining Multi−Line Macros: %unmacro

Multi−line macros can be removed with the %unmacro directive. Unlike the %undef directive, however, %unmacro takes an argument specification, and will only remove exact matches with that argument specification.

For example:

```
%macro foo 1−3 
         ; Do something 
%endmacro 
%unmacro foo 1−3
```
removes the previously defined macro foo, but

%macro bar 1−3 ; Do something %endmacro %unmacro bar 1

does *not* remove the macro bar, since the argument specification does not match exactly.

4.4 Conditional Assembly

Similarly to the C preprocessor, NASM allows sections of a source file to be assembled only if certain conditions are met. The general syntax of this feature looks like this:

```
%if<condition>
```
 ; some code which only appears if <condition> is met %elif<condition2> ; only appears if <condition> is not met but <condition2> is %else ; this appears if neither <condition> nor <condition2> was met %endif

The inverse forms %ifn and %elifn are also supported.

The %else clause is optional, as is the %elif clause. You can have more than one %elif clause as well.

There are a number of variants of the %if directive. Each has its corresponding %elif, %ifn, and %elifn directives; for example, the equivalents to the %ifdef directive are %elifdef, %ifndef, and %elifndef.

4.4.1 %ifdef: Testing Single−Line Macro Existence

Beginning a conditional−assembly block with the line %ifdef MACRO will assemble the subsequent code if, and only if, a single−line macro called MACRO is defined. If not, then the %elif and %else blocks (if any) will be processed instead.

For example, when debugging a program, you might want to write code such as

```
 ; perform some function 
%ifdef DEBUG 
           writefile 2,"Function performed successfully",13,10 
%endif 
           ; go and do something else
```
Then you could use the command–line option −dDEBUG to create a version of the program which produced debugging messages, and remove the option to generate the final release version of the program.

You can test for a macro *not* being defined by using %ifndef instead of %ifdef. You can also test for macro definitions in %elif blocks by using %elifdef and %elifndef.

4.4.2 %ifmacro: Testing Multi−Line Macro Existence

The %ifmacro directive operates in the same way as the %ifdef directive, except that it checks for the existence of a multi−line macro.

For example, you may be working with a large project and not have control over the macros in a library. You may want to create a macro with one name if it doesn't already exist, and another name if one with that name does exist.

The %ifmacro is considered true if defining a macro with the given name and number of arguments would cause a definitions conflict. For example:

```
%ifmacro MyMacro 1−3
```
%error "MyMacro 1−3" causes a conflict with an existing macro.

%else

%macro MyMacro 1−3

; insert code to define the macro

%endmacro

%endif

This will create the macro "MyMacro 1−3" if no macro already exists which would conflict with it, and emits a warning if there would be a definition conflict.

You can test for the macro not existing by using the $\frac{2}{3}$ if finacro instead of $\frac{2}{3}$ if macro. Additional tests can be performed in %elif blocks by using %elifmacro and %elifnmacro.

4.4.3 %ifctx: Testing the Context Stack

The conditional−assembly construct %ifctx will cause the subsequent code to be assembled if and only if the top context on the preprocessor's context stack has the same name as one of the arguments. As with %ifdef, the inverse and %elif forms %ifnctx, %elifctx and %elifnctx are also supported.

For more details of the context stack, see [section 4.7.](#page-59-1) For a sample use of $\text{\$ifctx$, see section 4.7.6}.$

4.4.4 %if: Testing Arbitrary Numeric Expressions

The conditional−assembly construct %if expr will cause the subsequent code to be assembled if and only if the value of the numeric expression expr is non−zero. An example of the use of this feature is in deciding when to break out of a %rep preprocessor loop: see [section 4.5](#page-57-0) for a detailed example.

The expression given to $\frac{1}{2}$ if, and its counterpart $\frac{1}{2}$ elif, is a critical expression (see [section 3.8\)](#page-37-0).

%if extends the normal NASM expression syntax, by providing a set of relational operators which are not normally available in expressions. The operators =, <, >, <=, >= and <> test equality, less–than, greater–than, less−or−equal, greater−or−equal and not−equal respectively. The C−like forms == and != are supported as alternative forms of = and <>. In addition, low−priority logical operators &&, ^^ and || are provided, supplying logical AND, logical XOR and logical OR. These work like the C logical operators (although C has no logical XOR), in that they always return either 0 or 1, and treat any non−zero input as 1 (so that ^^, for example, returns 1 if exactly one of its inputs is zero, and 0 otherwise). The relational operators also return 1 for true and 0 for false.

Like other %if constructs, %if has a counterpart %elif, and negative forms %ifn and %elifn.

4.4.5 %ifidn and %ifidni: Testing Exact Text Identity

The construct %ifidn text1, text2 will cause the subsequent code to be assembled if and only if text1 and text2, after expanding single−line macros, are identical pieces of text. Differences in white space are not counted.

%ifidni is similar to %ifidn, but is case−insensitive.

For example, the following macro pushes a register or number on the stack, and allows you to treat IP as a real register:

```
%macro pushparam 1 
   %ifidni %1,ip 
         call %%label 
   %%label: 
   %else 
         push %1 
   %endif
```
%endmacro

Like other %if constructs, %ifidn has a counterpart %elifidn, and negative forms %ifnidn and %elifnidn. Similarly, %ifidni has counterparts %elifidni, %ifnidni and %elifnidni.

4.4.6 %ifid, %ifnum, %ifstr: Testing Token Types

Some macros will want to perform different tasks depending on whether they are passed a number, a string, or an identifier. For example, a string output macro might want to be able to cope with being passed either a string constant or a pointer to an existing string.

The conditional assembly construct %ifid, taking one parameter (which may be blank), assembles the subsequent code if and only if the first token in the parameter exists and is an identifier. %ifnum works similarly, but tests for the token being a numeric constant; $\hat{\tau}$ if τ tests for it being a string.

For example, the writefile macro defined in [section 4.3.3](#page-47-0) can be extended to take advantage of i ifstr in the following fashion:

```
%macro writefile 2−3+
```

```
 %ifstr %2 
      jmp %%endstr
  \frac{1}{2} if \frac{1}{2}0 = 3 %%str: db %2,%3 
   %else 
     %%str: db %2 
   %endif 
     %%endstr: mov dx,%%str 
               mov cx,%%endstr−%%str
```


%endmacro

Then the writefile macro can cope with being called in either of the following two ways:

```
 writefile [file], strpointer, length 
 writefile [file], "hello", 13, 10
```
In the first, strpointer is used as the address of an already−declared string, and length is used as its length; in the second, a string is given to the macro, which therefore declares it itself and works out the address and length for itself.

Note the use of %if inside the %ifstr: this is to detect whether the macro was passed two arguments (so the string would be a single string constant, and db %2 would be adequate) or more (in which case, all but the first two would be lumped together into $\frac{1}{2}$, and db $\frac{1}{2}$ $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ would be required).

The usual %elif..., %ifn..., and %elifn... versions exist for each of %ifid, %ifnum and %ifstr.

4.4.7 %iftoken: Test for a Single Token

Some macros will want to do different things depending on if it is passed a single token (e.g. paste it to something else using %+) versus a multi−token sequence.

The conditional assembly construct %iftoken assembles the subsequent code if and only if the expanded parameters consist of exactly one token, possibly surrounded by whitespace.

For example:

%iftoken 1

will assemble the subsequent code, but

%iftoken −1

will not, since −1 contains two tokens: the unary minus operator −, and the number 1.

The usual %eliftoken, %ifntoken, and %elifntoken variants are also provided.

4.4.8 %ifempty: Test for Empty Expansion

The conditional assembly construct %ifempty assembles the subsequent code if and only if the expanded parameters do not contain any tokens at all, whitespace excepted.

The usual %elifempty, %ifnempty, and %elifnempty variants are also provided.

4.4.9 %ifenv: Test If Environment Variable Exists

The conditional assembly construct %ifenv assembles the subsequent code if and only if the environment variable referenced by the $\frac{1}{2}$ < env > directive exists.

The usual %elifenv, %ifnenv, and %elifnenv variants are also provided.

Just as for $\frac{1}{2}$ <env> the argument should be written as a string if it contains characters that would not be legal in an identifier. See [section 4.10.2.](#page-66-0)

4.5 Preprocessor Loops: %rep

NASM's TIMES prefix, though useful, cannot be used to invoke a multi−line macro multiple times, because it is processed by NASM after macros have already been expanded. Therefore NASM provides another form of loop, this time at the preprocessor level: %rep.

The directives %rep and %endrep (%rep takes a numeric argument, which can be an expression; %endrep takes no arguments) can be used to enclose a chunk of code, which is then replicated as many times as specified by the preprocessor:

```
%assign i 0 
%rep 64 
         inc word [table+2*i] 
%assign i i+1 
%endrep
```
This will generate a sequence of 64 INC instructions, incrementing every word of memory from [table] to [table+126].

For more complex termination conditions, or to break out of a repeat loop part way along, you can use the %exitrep directive to terminate the loop, like this:

```
fibonacci: 
%assign i 0 
%assign j 1 
%rep 100 
% i f j > 65535 %exitrep 
%endif 
          dw j 
%assign k j+i 
%assign i j 
%assign j k 
%endrep
```

```
fib_number equ ($−fibonacci)/2
```
This produces a list of all the Fibonacci numbers that will fit in 16 bits. Note that a maximum repeat count must still be given to %rep. This is to prevent the possibility of NASM getting into an infinite loop in the preprocessor, which (on multitasking or multi−user systems) would typically cause all the system memory to be gradually used up and other applications to start crashing.

Note a maximum repeat count is limited by 62 bit number, though it is hardly possible that you ever need anything bigger.

4.6 Source Files and Dependencies

These commands allow you to split your sources into multiple files.

4.6.1 %include: Including Other Files

Using, once again, a very similar syntax to the C preprocessor, NASM's preprocessor lets you include other source files into your code. This is done by the use of the %include directive:

%include "macros.mac"

will include the contents of the file macros.mac into the source file containing the $\frac{1}{2}$ include directive.

Include files are searched for in the current directory (the directory you're in when you run NASM, as opposed to the location of the NASM executable or the location of the source file), plus any directories specified on the NASM command line using the −i option.

The standard C idiom for preventing a file being included more than once is just as applicable in NASM: if the file macros.mac has the form

%ifndef MACROS_MAC %define MACROS_MAC ; now define some macros %endif

then including the file more than once will not cause errors, because the second time the file is included nothing will happen because the macro MACROS_MAC will already be defined.

You can force a file to be included even if there is no $%$ include directive that explicitly includes it, by using the −p option on the NASM command line (see [section 2.1.17\)](#page-22-2).

4.6.2 %pathsearch: Search the Include Path

The %pathsearch directive takes a single−line macro name and a filename, and declare or redefines the specified single−line macro to be the include−path−resolved version of the filename, if the file exists (otherwise, it is passed unchanged.)

For example,

%pathsearch MyFoo "foo.bin"

... with −Ibins/ in the include path may end up defining the macro MyFoo to be "bins/foo.bin".

4.6.3 %depend: Add Dependent Files

The %depend directive takes a filename and adds it to the list of files to be emitted as dependency generation when the −M options and its relatives (see [section 2.1.4\)](#page-19-0) are used. It produces no output.

This is generally used in conjunction with %pathsearch. For example, a simplified version of the standard macro wrapper for the INCBIN directive looks like:

```
%imacro incbin 1−2+ 0 
%pathsearch dep %1 
%depend dep 
         incbin dep,%2 
%endmacro
```
This first resolves the location of the file into the macro dep, then adds it to the dependency lists, and finally issues the assembler−level INCBIN directive.

4.6.4 %use: Include Standard Macro Package

The %use directive is similar to %include, but rather than including the contents of a file, it includes a named standard macro package. The standard macro packages are part of NASM, and are described in [chapter](#page-73-0) [5.](#page-73-0)

Unlike the $\frac{1}{2}$ include directive, package names for the $\frac{1}{2}$ use directive do not require quotes, but quotes are permitted. In NASM 2.04 and 2.05 the unquoted form would be macro−expanded; this is no longer true. Thus, the following lines are equivalent:

%use altreg %use 'altreg'

Standard macro packages are protected from multiple inclusion. When a standard macro package is used, a testable single−line macro of the form __USE_*package*__ is also defined, see [section 4.12.8.](#page-68-0)

4.7 The Context Stack

Having labels that are local to a macro definition is sometimes not quite powerful enough: sometimes you want to be able to share labels between several macro calls. An example might be a REPEAT ... UNTIL loop, in which the expansion of the REPEAT macro would need to be able to refer to a label which the UNTIL macro had defined. However, for such a macro you would also want to be able to nest these loops.

NASM provides this level of power by means of a *context stack*. The preprocessor maintains a stack of *contexts*, each of which is characterized by a name. You add a new context to the stack using the [§]push directive, and remove one using %pop. You can define labels that are local to a particular context on the stack.

4.7.1 %push and %pop: Creating and Removing Contexts

The %push directive is used to create a new context and place it on the top of the context stack. %push takes an optional argument, which is the name of the context. For example:

%push foobar

This pushes a new context called foobar on the stack. You can have several contexts on the stack with the same name: they can still be distinguished. If no name is given, the context is unnamed (this is normally used when both the γ push and the γ pop are inside a single macro definition.)

The directive %pop, taking one optional argument, removes the top context from the context stack and destroys it, along with any labels associated with it. If an argument is given, it must match the name of the current context, otherwise it will issue an error.

4.7.2 Context−Local Labels

Just as the usage %%foo defines a label which is local to the particular macro call in which it is used, the usage %\$foo is used to define a label which is local to the context on the top of the context stack. So the REPEAT and UNTIL example given above could be implemented by means of:

```
%macro repeat 0
```
 %push repeat %\$begin:

%endmacro

```
%macro until 1 
         j%−1 %$begin 
     %pop
```
%endmacro

and invoked by means of, for example,

```
 mov cx,string 
 repeat 
 add cx,3 
 scasb 
 until e
```
which would scan every fourth byte of a string in search of the byte in AL .

If you need to define, or access, labels local to the context *below* the top one on the stack, you can use %\$\$foo, or %\$\$\$foo for the context below that, and so on.

4.7.3 Context−Local Single−Line Macros

NASM also allows you to define single−line macros which are local to a particular context, in just the same way:

%define %\$localmac 3

will define the single−line macro %\$localmac to be local to the top context on the stack. Of course, after a subsequent %push, it can then still be accessed by the name %\$\$localmac.

4.7.4 Context Fall−Through Lookup

Context fall−through lookup (automatic searching of outer contexts) is a feature that was added in NASM version 0.98.03. Unfortunately, this feature is unintuitive and can result in buggy code that would have otherwise been prevented by NASM's error reporting. As a result, this feature has been *deprecated*. NASM version 2.09 will issue a warning when usage of this *deprecated* feature is detected. Starting with NASM version 2.10, usage of this *deprecated* feature will simply result in an *expression syntax error*.

An example usage of this *deprecated* feature follows:

```
%macro ctxthru 0 
%push ctx1 
     %assign %$external 1 
          %push ctx2 
              %assign %$internal 1 
              mov eax, %$external 
              mov eax, %$internal 
          %pop 
%pop 
%endmacro
```
As demonstrated, %\$external is being defined in the ctx1 context and referenced within the ctx2 context. With context fall−through lookup, referencing an undefined context−local macro like this implicitly searches through all outer contexts until a match is made or isn't found in any context. As a result, %\$external referenced within the ctx2 context would implicitly use %\$external as defined in ctx1.

Most people would expect NASM to issue an error in this situation because %\$external was never defined within ctx2 and also isn't qualified with the proper context depth, %\$\$external.

Here is a revision of the above example with proper context depth:

```
%macro ctxthru 0 
%push ctx1 
     %assign %$external 1 
          %push ctx2 
              %assign %$internal 1 
              mov eax, %$$external 
              mov eax, %$internal 
          %pop 
%pop 
%endmacro
```
As demonstrated, $% \xi$ external is still being defined in the ctx1 context and referenced within the ctx2 context. However, the reference to %\$external within ctx2 has been fully qualified with the proper context depth, %\$\$external, and thus is no longer ambiguous, unintuitive or erroneous.

4.7.5 %repl: Renaming a Context

If you need to change the name of the top context on the stack (in order, for example, to have it respond differently to %ifctx), you can execute a %pop followed by a %push; but this will have the side effect of destroying all context−local labels and macros associated with the context that was just popped.

NASM provides the directive %repl, which *replaces* a context with a different name, without touching the associated macros and labels. So you could replace the destructive code

%pop %push newname

with the non−destructive version %repl newname.

4.7.6 Example Use of the Context Stack: Block IFs

This example makes use of almost all the context−stack features, including the conditional−assembly construct %ifctx, to implement a block IF statement as a set of macros.

```
%macro if 1 
     %push if 
     j%−1 %$ifnot 
%endmacro 
%macro else 0 
   %ifctx if 
         %repl else 
          jmp %$ifend 
          %$ifnot: 
   %else 
          %error "expected 'if' before 'else'"
```

```
 %endif 
%endmacro 
%macro endif 0 
   %ifctx if 
          %$ifnot: 
          %pop 
   %elifctx else 
          %$ifend: 
          %pop 
   %else 
          %error "expected 'if' or 'else' before 'endif'" 
   %endif
```
%endmacro

This code is more robust than the REPEAT and UNTIL macros given in [section 4.7.2,](#page-59-0) because it uses conditional assembly to check that the macros are issued in the right order (for example, not calling endif before if) and issues a %error if they're not.

In addition, the endif macro has to be able to cope with the two distinct cases of either directly following an if, or following an else. It achieves this, again, by using conditional assembly to do different things depending on whether the context on top of the stack is if or else.

The else macro has to preserve the context on the stack, in order to have the $\frac{25}{10}$ referred to by the if macro be the same as the one defined by the endif macro, but has to change the context's name so that endif will know there was an intervening else. It does this by the use of %repl.

A sample usage of these macros might look like:

```
 cmp ax,bx 
 if ae 
        cmp bx,cx 
        if ae 
                 mov ax,cx 
        else 
                 mov ax,bx 
        endif 
 else 
        cmp ax,cx 
        if ae 
                 mov ax,cx 
        endif
```
endif

The block−IF macros handle nesting quite happily, by means of pushing another context, describing the inner if, on top of the one describing the outer if; thus else and endif always refer to the last unmatched if or else.

4.8 Stack Relative Preprocessor Directives

The following preprocessor directives provide a way to use labels to refer to local variables allocated on the stack.

- %arg (see [section 4.8.1\)](#page-63-0)
- *%stacksize (see [section 4.8.2\)](#page-63-1)*
- *Slocal* (see [section 4.8.3\)](#page-64-0)

4.8.1 %arg Directive

The %arg directive is used to simplify the handling of parameters passed on the stack. Stack based parameter passing is used by many high level languages, including C, C++ and Pascal.

While NASM has macros which attempt to duplicate this functionality (see [section 8.4.5\)](#page-109-0), the syntax is not particularly convenient to use and is not TASM compatible. Here is an example which shows the use of %arg without any external macros:

some_function:

```
%push mycontext : save the current context
 %stacksize large ; tell NASM to use bp 
 %arg i:word, j_ptr:word 
    mov ax,[i] 
    mov bx,[j_ptr] 
    add ax,[bx] 
    ret 
%pop \qquad \qquad ; restore original context
```
This is similar to the procedure defined in [section 8.4.5](#page-109-0) and adds the value in i to the value pointed to by j_ptr and returns the sum in the ax register. See [section 4.7.1](#page-59-2) for an explanation of push and pop and the use of context stacks.

4.8.2 %stacksize Directive

The %stacksize directive is used in conjunction with the %arg (see [section 4.8.1](#page-63-0)) and the %local (see [section 4.8.3\)](#page-64-0) directives. It tells NASM the default size to use for subsequent %arg and %local directives. The %stacksize directive takes one required argument which is one of flat, flat64, large or small.

%stacksize flat

This form causes NASM to use stack−based parameter addressing relative to ebp and it assumes that a near form of call was used to get to this label (i.e. that eip is on the stack).

%stacksize flat64

This form causes NASM to use stack−based parameter addressing relative to rbp and it assumes that a near form of call was used to get to this label (i.e. that rip is on the stack).

%stacksize large

This form uses bp to do stack−based parameter addressing and assumes that a far form of call was used to get to this address (i.e. that ip and cs are on the stack).

%stacksize small

This form also uses bp to address stack parameters, but it is different from large because it also assumes that the old value of bp is pushed onto the stack (i.e. it expects an ENTER instruction). In other words, it expects that bp, ip and cs are on the top of the stack, underneath any local space which may have been allocated by ENTER. This form is probably most useful when used in combination with the %local directive (see [section 4.8.3\)](#page-64-0).

4.8.3 %local Directive

The %local directive is used to simplify the use of local temporary stack variables allocated in a stack frame. Automatic local variables in C are an example of this kind of variable. The %local directive is most useful when used with the %stacksize (see [section 4.8.2](#page-63-1) and is also compatible with the %arg directive (see [section 4.8.1](#page-63-0)). It allows simplified reference to variables on the stack which have been allocated typically by using the ENTER instruction. An example of its use is the following:

silly_swap:

```
%push mycontext \qquad \qquad ; save the current context
    %stacksize small ; tell NASM to use bp 
    %assign %$localsize 0 ; see text for explanation 
    %local old_ax:word, old_dx:word 
      enter %$localsize,0 ; see text for explanation
       mov [old_ax],ax ; swap ax & bx 
      mov [old_dx],dx ; and swap dx & cx
       mov ax,bx 
       mov dx,cx 
       mov bx,[old_ax] 
       mov cx,[old_dx] 
      leave \qquad \qquad ; restore old bp
 ret ; 
   %pop \longrightarrow ; restore original context
```
The %\$localsize variable is used internally by the %local directive and *must* be defined within the current context before the %local directive may be used. Failure to do so will result in one expression syntax error for each ϵ local variable declared. It then may be used in the construction of an appropriately sized ENTER instruction as shown in the example.

4.9 Reporting User−Defined Errors: %error, %warning, %fatal

The preprocessor directive %error will cause NASM to report an error if it occurs in assembled code. So if other users are going to try to assemble your source files, you can ensure that they define the right macros by means of code like this:

```
%ifdef F1 
     ; do some setup
```

```
%elifdef F2 
     ; do some different setup 
%else 
     %error "Neither F1 nor F2 was defined." 
%endif
```
Then any user who fails to understand the way your code is supposed to be assembled will be quickly warned of their mistake, rather than having to wait until the program crashes on being run and then not knowing what went wrong.

Similarly, %warning issues a warning, but allows assembly to continue:

```
%ifdef F1 
     ; do some setup 
%elifdef F2 
     ; do some different setup 
%else 
     %warning "Neither F1 nor F2 was defined, assuming F1." 
     %define F1 
%endif
```
%error and %warning are issued only on the final assembly pass. This makes them safe to use in conjunction with tests that depend on symbol values.

%fatal terminates assembly immediately, regardless of pass. This is useful when there is no point in continuing the assembly further, and doing so is likely just going to cause a spew of confusing error messages.

It is optional for the message string after %error, %warning or %fatal to be quoted. If it is *not*, then single−line macros are expanded in it, which can be used to display more information to the user. For example:

```
sif foo > 64
     %assign foo_over foo−64 
     %error foo is foo_over bytes too large 
%endif
```
4.10 Other Preprocessor Directives

NASM also has preprocessor directives which allow access to information from external sources. Currently they include:

- $\text{\$line}$ and $\text{A10.1}.$ A2M to correctly handle the output of another preprocessor (see [section 4.10.1\)](#page-65-0).
- %! enables NASM to read in the value of an environment variable, which can then be used in your program (see [section 4.10.2\)](#page-66-0).

4.10.1 %line Directive

The %line directive is used to notify NASM that the input line corresponds to a specific line number in another file. Typically this other file would be an original source file, with the current NASM input being the output of a pre−processor. The %line directive allows NASM to output messages which indicate the line number of the original source file, instead of the file that is being read by NASM.

This preprocessor directive is not generally of use to programmers, by may be of interest to preprocessor authors. The usage of the %line preprocessor directive is as follows:

%line nnn[+mmm] [filename]

In this directive, nnn identifies the line of the original source file which this line corresponds to, mmm is an optional parameter which specifies a line increment value; each line of the input file read in is considered to correspond to mmm lines of the original source file. Finally, filename is an optional parameter which specifies the file name of the original source file.

After reading a %line preprocessor directive, NASM will report all file name and line numbers relative to the values specified therein.

4.10.2 %!<env>: Read an environment variable.

The $\frac{1}{2}$ <env> directive makes it possible to read the value of an environment variable at assembly time. This could, for example, be used to store the contents of an environment variable into a string, which could be used at some other point in your code.

For example, suppose that you have an environment variable FOO, and you want the contents of FOO to be embedded in your program. You could do that as follows:

%defstr FOO %!FOO

See [section 4.1.8](#page-44-0) for notes on the %defstr directive.

If the name of the environment variable contains non−identifier characters, you can use string quotes to surround the name of the variable, for example:

%defstr C_colon %!'C:'

4.11 Comment Blocks: %comment

The %comment and %endcomment directives are used to specify a block of commented (i.e. unprocessed) code/text. Everything between %comment and %endcomment will be ignored by the preprocessor.

%comment

 ; some code, text or data to be ignored %endcomment

4.12 Standard Macros

NASM defines a set of standard macros, which are already defined when it starts to process any source file. If you really need a program to be assembled with no pre−defined macros, you can use the %clear directive to empty the preprocessor of everything but context−local preprocessor variables and single−line macros.

Most user−level assembler directives (see [chapter 6\)](#page-75-0) are implemented as macros which invoke primitive directives; these are described in [chapter 6.](#page-75-0) The rest of the standard macro set is described here.

4.12.1 NASM Version Macros

The single−line macros __NASM_MAJOR__, __NASM_MINOR__, __NASM_SUBMINOR__ and ___NASM_PATCHLEVEL__ expand to the major, minor, subminor and patch level parts of the version number of NASM being used. So, under NASM 0.98.32p1 for example, __NASM_MAJOR__ would be defined to be 0, __NASM_MINOR__ would be defined as 98, __NASM_SUBMINOR__ would be defined to 32, and ___NASM_PATCHLEVEL__ would be defined as 1.

Additionally, the macro __NASM_SNAPSHOT__ is defined for automatically generated snapshot releases *only*.

4.12.2 __NASM_VERSION_ID__: NASM Version ID

The single−line macro __NASM_VERSION_ID__ expands to a dword integer representing the full version number of the version of nasm being used. The value is the equivalent to __NASM_MAJOR__, __NASM_MINOR__, __NASM_SUBMINOR__ and ___NASM_PATCHLEVEL__ concatenated to produce a single doubleword. Hence, for 0.98.32p1, the returned number would be equivalent to:

dd 0x00622001

or

db 1,32,98,0

Note that the above lines are generate exactly the same code, the second line is used just to give an indication of the order that the separate values will be present in memory.

4.12.3 __NASM_VER__: NASM Version string

The single−line macro __NASM_VER__ expands to a string which defines the version number of nasm being used. So, under NASM 0.98.32 for example,

db __NASM_VER__

would expand to

db "0.98.32"

4.12.4 __FILE__ and __LINE__: File Name and Line Number

Like the C preprocessor, NASM allows the user to find out the file name and line number containing the current instruction. The macro FILE expands to a string constant giving the name of the current input file (which may change through the course of assembly if %include directives are used), and __LINE__ expands to a numeric constant giving the current line number in the input file.

These macros could be used, for example, to communicate debugging information to a macro, since invoking __LINE__ inside a macro definition (either single−line or multi−line) will return the line number of the macro *call*, rather than *definition*. So to determine where in a piece of code a crash is occurring, for example, one could write a routine stillhere, which is passed a line number in EAX and outputs something like 'line 155: still here'. You could then write a macro

%macro notdeadyet 0

%endmacro

and then pepper your code with calls to notdeadyet until you find the crash point.

4.12.5 __BITS__: Current BITS Mode

The BITS standard macro is updated every time that the BITS mode is set using the BITS XX or [BITS XX] directive, where XX is a valid mode number of 16, 32 or 64. __BITS__ receives the specified mode number and makes it globally available. This can be very useful for those who utilize mode−dependent macros.

4.12.6 __OUTPUT_FORMAT__: Current Output Format

The __OUTPUT_FORMAT__ standard macro holds the current Output Format, as given by the −f option or NASM's default. Type nasm −hf for a list.

```
%ifidn __OUTPUT_FORMAT__, win32 
  %define NEWLINE 13, 10 
%elifidn __OUTPUT_FORMAT__, elf32 
  %define NEWLINE 10 
%endif
```
4.12.7 Assembly Date and Time Macros

NASM provides a variety of macros that represent the timestamp of the assembly session.

- The __DATE__ and __TIME__ macros give the assembly date and time as strings, in ISO 8601 format ("YYYY−MM−DD" and "HH:MM:SS", respectively.)
- The __DATE_NUM___ and __TIME_NUM___ macros give the assembly date and time in numeric form; in the format YYYYMMDD and HHMMSS respectively.
- The __UTC_DATE__ and __UTC_TIME__ macros give the assembly date and time in universal time (UTC) as strings, in ISO 8601 format ("YYYY−MM−DD" and "HH:MM:SS", respectively.) If the host platform doesn't provide UTC time, these macros are undefined.
- The _UTC_DATE_NUM__ and _UTC_TIME_NUM__ macros give the assembly date and time universal time (UTC) in numeric form; in the format YYYYMMDD and HHMMSS respectively. If the host platform doesn't provide UTC time, these macros are undefined.
- The <u>posix</u> TIME macro is defined as a number containing the number of seconds since the POSIX epoch, 1 January 1970 00:00:00 UTC; excluding any leap seconds. This is computed using UTC time if available on the host platform, otherwise it is computed using the local time as if it was UTC.

All instances of time and date macros in the same assembly session produce consistent output. For example, in an assembly session started at 42 seconds after midnight on January 1, 2010 in Moscow (timezone UTC+3) these macros would have the following values, assuming, of course, a properly configured environment with a correct clock:

4.12.8 __USE_*package***__: Package Include Test**

When a standard macro package (see [chapter 5\)](#page-73-0) is included with the s use directive (see [section 4.6.4\)](#page-59-3), a single−line macro of the form __USE_*package*__ is automatically defined. This allows testing if a particular package is invoked or not.

For example, if the altreg package is included (see [section 5.1](#page-73-1)), then the macro __USE_ALTREG_ is defined.

4.12.9 __PASS__: Assembly Pass

The macro __PASS__ is defined to be 1 on preparatory passes, and 2 on the final pass. In preprocess−only mode, it is set to 3, and when running only to generate dependencies (due to the −M or −MG option, see [section 2.1.4\)](#page-19-0) it is set to 0.

Avoid using this macro if at all possible. It is tremendously easy to generate very strange errors by misusing it, and the semantics may change in future versions of NASM.

4.12.10 STRUC and ENDSTRUC: Declaring Structure Data Types

The core of NASM contains no intrinsic means of defining data structures; instead, the preprocessor is sufficiently powerful that data structures can be implemented as a set of macros. The macros STRUC and ENDSTRUC are used to define a structure data type.

STRUC takes one or two parameters. The first parameter is the name of the data type. The second, optional parameter is the base offset of the structure. The name of the data type is defined as a symbol with the value of the base offset, and the name of the data type with the suffix _size appended to it is defined as an EQU giving the size of the structure. Once STRUC has been issued, you are defining the structure, and should define fields using the RESB family of pseudo−instructions, and then invoke ENDSTRUC to finish the definition.

For example, to define a structure called mytype containing a longword, a word, a byte and a string of bytes, you might code

struc mytype

endstruc

The above code defines six symbols: mt_long as 0 (the offset from the beginning of a mytype structure to the longword field), mt_word as 4, mt_byte as 6, mt_str as 7, mytype_size as 39, and mytype itself as zero.

The reason why the structure type name is defined at zero by default is a side effect of allowing structures to work with the local label mechanism: if your structure members tend to have the same names in more than one structure, you can define the above structure like this:

struc mytype

endstruc

This defines the offsets to the structure fields as mytype.long, mytype.word, mytype.byte and mytype.str.

NASM, since it has no *intrinsic* structure support, does not support any form of period notation to refer to the elements of a structure once you have one (except the above local−label notation), so code such as mov ax,[mystruc.mt_word] is not valid. mt_word is a constant just like any other constant, so the correct syntax is mov ax,[mystruc+mt_word] or mov ax,[mystruc+mytype.word].

Sometimes you only have the address of the structure displaced by an offset. For example, consider this standard stack frame setup:

push ebp mov ebp, esp sub esp, 40

In this case, you could access an element by subtracting the offset:

mov [ebp − 40 + mytype.word], ax

However, if you do not want to repeat this offset, you can use –40 as a base offset:

struc mytype, −40

And access an element this way:

mov [ebp + mytype.word], ax

4.12.11 ISTRUC, AT and IEND: Declaring Instances of Structures

Having defined a structure type, the next thing you typically want to do is to declare instances of that structure in your data segment. NASM provides an easy way to do this in the ISTRUC mechanism. To declare a structure of type mytype in a program, you code something like this:

```
mystruc: 
    istruc mytype 
        at mt_long, dd 123456 
        at mt_word, dw 1024 
        at mt_byte, db 'x' 
        at mt_str, db 'hello, world', 13, 10, 0
```
iend

The function of the AT macro is to make use of the TIMES prefix to advance the assembly position to the correct point for the specified structure field, and then to declare the specified data. Therefore the structure fields must be declared in the same order as they were specified in the structure definition.

If the data to go in a structure field requires more than one source line to specify, the remaining source lines can easily come after the AT line. For example:

> at mt_str, db 123,134,145,156,167,178,189 db 190,100,0

Depending on personal taste, you can also omit the code part of the AT line completely, and start the structure field on the next line:

```
 at mt_str 
        db 'hello, world' 
        db 13,10,0
```
4.12.12 ALIGN and ALIGNB: Data Alignment

The ALIGN and ALIGNB macros provides a convenient way to align code or data on a word, longword, paragraph or other boundary. (Some assemblers call this directive EVEN.) The syntax of the ALIGN and ALIGNB macros is

Both macros require their first argument to be a power of two; they both compute the number of additional bytes required to bring the length of the current section up to a multiple of that power of two, and then apply the TIMES prefix to their second argument to perform the alignment.

If the second argument is not specified, the default for ALIGN is NOP, and the default for ALIGNB is RESB 1. So if the second argument is specified, the two macros are equivalent. Normally, you can just use ALIGN in code and data sections and ALIGNB in BSS sections, and never need the second argument except for special purposes.

ALIGN and ALIGNB, being simple macros, perform no error checking: they cannot warn you if their first argument fails to be a power of two, or if their second argument generates more than one byte of code. In each of these cases they will silently do the wrong thing.

ALIGNB (or ALIGN with a second argument of RESB 1) can be used within structure definitions:

```
struc mytype2 
   mt_byte: 
          resb 1 
          alignb 2 
   mt_word: 
           resw 1 
           alignb 4
```

```
 mt_long: 
         resd 1 
 mt_str: 
         resb 32
```
endstruc

This will ensure that the structure members are sensibly aligned relative to the base of the structure.

A final caveat: ALIGN and ALIGNB work relative to the beginning of the *section*, not the beginning of the address space in the final executable. Aligning to a 16−byte boundary when the section you're in is only guaranteed to be aligned to a 4−byte boundary, for example, is a waste of effort. Again, NASM does not check that the section's alignment characteristics are sensible for the use of ALIGN or ALIGNB.

Both ALIGN and ALIGNB do call SECTALIGN macro implicitly. See [section 4.12.13](#page-72-0) for details.
See also the smartalign standard macro package, [section 5.2.](#page-73-0)

4.12.13 SECTALIGN: Section Alignment

The SECTALIGN macros provides a way to modify alignment attribute of output file section. Unlike the align= attribute (which is allowed at section definition only) the SECTALIGN macro may be used at any time.

For example the directive

SECTALIGN 16

sets the section alignment requirements to 16 bytes. Once increased it can not be decreased, the magnitude may grow only.

Note that ALIGN (see [section 4.12.12\)](#page-71-0) calls the SECTALIGN macro implicitly so the active section alignment requirements may be updated. This is by default behaviour, if for some reason you want the ALIGN do not call SECTALIGN at all use the directive

SECTALIGN OFF

It is still possible to turn in on again by

SECTALIGN ON

Chapter 5: Standard Macro Packages

The %use directive (see [section 4.6.4\)](#page-59-0) includes one of the standard macro packages included with the NASM distribution and compiled into the NASM binary. It operates like the %include directive (see [section 4.6.1](#page-58-0)), but the included contents is provided by NASM itself.

The names of standard macro packages are case insensitive, and can be quoted or not.

5.1 altreg: Alternate Register Names

The altreg standard macro package provides alternate register names. It provides numeric register names for all registers (not just R8–R15), the Intel−defined aliases R8L–R15L for the low bytes of register (as opposed to the NASM/AMD standard names R8B–R15B), and the names R0H–R3H (by analogy with R0L–R3L) for AH, CH, DH, and BH.

```
Example use:
%use altreg 
proc: 
      mov r01, r3h ; mov al, bh
       ret
See also section 11.1.
```
5.2 smartalign: Smart ALIGN Macro

The smartalign standard macro package provides for an ALIGN macro which is more powerful than the default (and backwards−compatible) one (see [section 4.12.12\)](#page-71-0). When the smartalign package is enabled, when ALIGN is used without a second argument, NASM will generate a sequence of instructions more efficient than a series of NOP. Furthermore, if the padding exceeds a specific threshold, then NASM will generate a jump over the entire padding sequence.

The specific instructions generated can be controlled with the new ALIGNMODE macro. This macro takes two parameters: one mode, and an optional jump threshold override. If (for any reason) you need to turn off the jump completely just set jump threshold value to -1 (or set it to no jmp). The following modes are possible:

- generic: Works on all x86 CPUs and should have reasonable performance. The default jump threshold is 8. This is the default.
- nop: Pad out with NOP instructions. The only difference compared to the standard ALIGN macro is that NASM can still jump over a large padding area. The default jump threshold is 16.
- k7: Optimize for the AMD K7 (Athlon/Althon XP). These instructions should still work on all x86 CPUs. The default jump threshold is 16.
- k8: Optimize for the AMD K8 (Opteron/Althon 64). These instructions should still work on all x86 CPUs. The default jump threshold is 16.

• p6: Optimize for Intel CPUs. This uses the long NOP instructions first introduced in Pentium Pro. This is incompatible with all CPUs of family 5 or lower, as well as some VIA CPUs and several virtualization solutions. The default jump threshold is 16.

The macro __ALIGNMODE__ is defined to contain the current alignment mode. A number of other macros beginning with __ALIGN_ are used internally by this macro package.

5.3 fp: Floating−point macros

This packages contains the following floating−point convenience macros:

Chapter 6: Assembler Directives

NASM, though it attempts to avoid the bureaucracy of assemblers like MASM and TASM, is nevertheless forced to support a *few* directives. These are described in this chapter.

NASM's directives come in two types: *user−level* directives and *primitive* directives. Typically, each directive has a user−level form and a primitive form. In almost all cases, we recommend that users use the user−level forms of the directives, which are implemented as macros which call the primitive forms.

Primitive directives are enclosed in square brackets; user−level directives are not.

In addition to the universal directives described in this chapter, each object file format can optionally supply extra directives in order to control particular features of that file format. These *format−specific* directives are documented along with the formats that implement them, in [chapter 7.](#page-81-0)

6.1 BITS: Specifying Target Processor Mode

The BITS directive specifies whether NASM should generate code designed to run on a processor operating in 16−bit mode, 32−bit mode or 64−bit mode. The syntax is BITS XX, where XX is 16, 32 or 64.

In most cases, you should not need to use BITS explicitly. The aout, coff, elf, macho, win32 and win64 object formats, which are designed for use in 32−bit or 64−bit operating systems, all cause NASM to select 32−bit or 64–bit mode, respectively, by default. The obj object format allows you to specify each segment you define as either USE16 or USE32, and NASM will set its operating mode accordingly, so the use of the BITS directive is once again unnecessary.

The most likely reason for using the BITS directive is to write 32–bit or 64–bit code in a flat binary file; this is because the bin output format defaults to 16−bit mode in anticipation of it being used most frequently to write DOS .COM programs, DOS .SYS device drivers and boot loader software.

You do *not* need to specify BITS 32 merely in order to use 32−bit instructions in a 16−bit DOS program; if you do, the assembler will generate incorrect code because it will be writing code targeted at a 32−bit platform, to be run on a 16−bit one.

When NASM is in BITS 16 mode, instructions which use 32–bit data are prefixed with an 0x66 byte, and those referring to 32−bit addresses have an 0x67 prefix. In BITS 32 mode, the reverse is true: 32−bit instructions require no prefixes, whereas instructions using 16−bit data need an 0x66 and those working on 16−bit addresses need an 0x67.

When NASM is in BITS 64 mode, most instructions operate the same as they do for BITS 32 mode. However, there are 8 more general and SSE registers, and 16−bit addressing is no longer supported.

The default address size is 64 bits; 32−bit addressing can be selected with the 0x67 prefix. The default operand size is still 32 bits, however, and the 0x66 prefix selects 16−bit operand size. The REX prefix is used both to select 64−bit operand size, and to access the new registers. NASM automatically inserts REX prefixes when necessary.

When the REX prefix is used, the processor does not know how to address the AH, BH, CH or DH (high 8−bit legacy) registers. Instead, it is possible to access the the low 8−bits of the SP, BP SI and DI registers as SPL, BPL, SIL and DIL, respectively; but only when the REX prefix is used.

The BITS directive has an exactly equivalent primitive form, [BITS 16], [BITS 32] and [BITS 64]. The user−level form is a macro which has no function other than to call the primitive form.

Note that the space is neccessary, e.g. BITS32 will *not* work!

6.1.1 USE16 & USE32: Aliases for BITS

The 'USE16' and 'USE32' directives can be used in place of 'BITS 16' and 'BITS 32', for compatibility with other assemblers.

6.2 DEFAULT: Change the assembler defaults

The DEFAULT directive changes the assembler defaults. Normally, NASM defaults to a mode where the programmer is expected to explicitly specify most features directly. However, this is occationally obnoxious, as the explicit form is pretty much the only one one wishes to use.

Currently, the only DEFAULT that is settable is whether or not registerless instructions in 64−bit mode are RIP–relative or not. By default, they are absolute unless overridden with the REL specifier (see [section 3.3](#page-31-0)). However, if DEFAULT REL is specified, REL is default, unless overridden with the ABS specifier, *except when used with an FS or GS segment override*.

The special handling of FS and GS overrides are due to the fact that these registers are generally used as thread pointers or other special functions in 64−bit mode, and generating RIP–relative addresses would be extremely confusing.

DEFAULT REL is disabled with DEFAULT ABS.

6.3 SECTION or SEGMENT: Changing and Defining Sections

The SECTION directive (SEGMENT is an exactly equivalent synonym) changes which section of the output file the code you write will be assembled into. In some object file formats, the number and names of sections are fixed; in others, the user may make up as many as they wish. Hence SECTION may sometimes give an error message, or may define a new section, if you try to switch to a section that does not (yet) exist.

The Unix object formats, and the bin object format (but see [section 7.1.3](#page-82-0), all support the standardized section names .text, .data and .bss for the code, data and uninitialized−data sections. The obj format, by contrast, does not recognize these section names as being special, and indeed will strip off the leading period of any section name that has one.

6.3.1 The __SECT__ Macro

The SECTION directive is unusual in that its user−level form functions differently from its primitive form. The primitive form, [SECTION xyz], simply switches the current target section to the one given. The user−level form, SECTION xyz, however, first defines the single−line macro __SECT__ to be the primitive [SECTION] directive which it is about to issue, and then issues it. So the user−level directive

SECTION .text

expands to the two lines

%define __SECT___ [SECTION .text] [SECTION .text]

Users may find it useful to make use of this in their own macros. For example, the writefile macro defined in [section 4.3.3](#page-47-0) can be usefully rewritten in the following more sophisticated form:

```
%macro writefile 2+ 
        [section .data] 
  %%str: db %2 
  %%endstr: 
          __SECT__ 
        mov dx,%%str 
        mov cx,%%endstr−%%str 
        mov bx,%1 
        mov ah,0x40 
        int 0x21
```
%endmacro

This form of the macro, once passed a string to output, first switches temporarily to the data section of the file, using the primitive form of the SECTION directive so as not to modify SECT_. It then declares its string in the data section, and then invokes __SECT__ to switch back to *whichever* section the user was previously working in. It thus avoids the need, in the previous version of the macro, to include a JMP instruction to jump over the data, and also does not fail if, in a complicated OBJ format module, the user could potentially be assembling the code in any of several separate code sections.

6.4 ABSOLUTE: Defining Absolute Labels

The ABSOLUTE directive can be thought of as an alternative form of SECTION: it causes the subsequent code to be directed at no physical section, but at the hypothetical section starting at the given absolute address. The only instructions you can use in this mode are the RESB family.

ABSOLUTE is used as follows:

absolute 0x1A

This example describes a section of the PC BIOS data area, at segment address 0x40: the above code defines kbuf_chr to be 0x1A, kbuf_free to be 0x1C, and kbuf to be 0x1E.

The user−level form of ABSOLUTE, like that of SECTION, redefines the __SECT__ macro when it is invoked.

STRUC and ENDSTRUC are defined as macros which use ABSOLUTE (and also __SECT__).

ABSOLUTE doesn't have to take an absolute constant as an argument: it can take an expression (actually, a critical expression: see [section 3.8\)](#page-37-0) and it can be a value in a segment. For example, a TSR can re−use its setup code as run−time BSS like this:


```
 ; the resident part of the TSR goes here 
setup: 
         ; now write the code that installs the TSR here 
absolute setup 
runtimevar1 resw 1 
runtimevar2 resd 20 
tsr_end:
```
This defines some variables 'on top of' the setup code, so that after the setup has finished running, the space it took up can be re−used as data storage for the running TSR. The symbol 'tsr_end' can be used to calculate the total size of the part of the TSR that needs to be made resident.

6.5 EXTERN: Importing Symbols from Other Modules

EXTERN is similar to the MASM directive EXTRN and the C keyword extern: it is used to declare a symbol which is not defined anywhere in the module being assembled, but is assumed to be defined in some other module and needs to be referred to by this one. Not every object−file format can support external variables: the bin format cannot.

The EXTERN directive takes as many arguments as you like. Each argument is the name of a symbol:

extern _printf extern _sscanf,_fscanf

Some object−file formats provide extra features to the EXTERN directive. In all cases, the extra features are used by suffixing a colon to the symbol name followed by object−format specific text. For example, the obj format allows you to declare that the default segment base of an external should be the group dgroup by means of the directive

extern _variable:wrt dgroup

The primitive form of EXTERN differs from the user−level form only in that it can take only one argument at a time: the support for multiple arguments is implemented at the preprocessor level.

You can declare the same variable as EXTERN more than once: NASM will quietly ignore the second and later redeclarations. You can't declare a variable as EXTERN as well as something else, though.

6.6 GLOBAL: Exporting Symbols to Other Modules

GLOBAL is the other end of EXTERN: if one module declares a symbol as EXTERN and refers to it, then in order to prevent linker errors, some other module must actually *define* the symbol and declare it as GLOBAL. Some assemblers use the name PUBLIC for this purpose.

The GLOBAL directive applying to a symbol must appear *before* the definition of the symbol.

GLOBAL uses the same syntax as EXTERN, except that it must refer to symbols which *are* defined in the same module as the GLOBAL directive. For example:

```
global _main 
_main: 
          ; some code
```
GLOBAL, like EXTERN, allows object formats to define private extensions by means of a colon. The elf object format, for example, lets you specify whether global data items are functions or data:

global hashlookup:function, hashtable:data

Like EXTERN, the primitive form of GLOBAL differs from the user−level form only in that it can take only one argument at a time.

6.7 COMMON: Defining Common Data Areas

The COMMON directive is used to declare *common variables*. A common variable is much like a global variable declared in the uninitialized data section, so that

common intvar 4

is similar in function to

global intvar section .bss

intvar resd 1

The difference is that if more than one module defines the same common variable, then at link time those variables will be *merged*, and references to intvar in all modules will point at the same piece of memory.

Like GLOBAL and EXTERN, COMMON supports object−format specific extensions. For example, the obj format allows common variables to be NEAR or FAR, and the elf format allows you to specify the alignment requirements of a common variable:

common commvar 4:near ; works in OBJ common intarray 100:4 ; works in ELF: 4 byte aligned

Once again, like EXTERN and GLOBAL, the primitive form of COMMON differs from the user−level form only in that it can take only one argument at a time.

6.8 CPU: Defining CPU Dependencies

The CPU directive restricts assembly to those instructions which are available on the specified CPU.

Options are:

- CPU 8086 Assemble only 8086 instruction set
- CPU 186 Assemble instructions up to the 80186 instruction set
- CPU 286 Assemble instructions up to the 286 instruction set
- CPU 386 Assemble instructions up to the 386 instruction set
- CPU 486,486 instruction set
- CPU 586 Pentium instruction set
- CPU PENTIUM Same as 586
- CPU 686 P6 instruction set
- CPU PPRO Same as 686
- CPU P2 Same as 686
- CPU P3 Pentium III (Katmai) instruction sets
- CPU KATMAI Same as P3
- CPU P4 Pentium 4 (Willamette) instruction set
- CPU WILLAMETTE Same as P4
- CPU PRESCOTT Prescott instruction set
- CPU X64 x86−64 (x64/AMD64/Intel 64) instruction set
- CPU IA64 IA64 CPU (in x86 mode) instruction set

All options are case insensitive. All instructions will be selected only if they apply to the selected CPU or lower. By default, all instructions are available.

6.9 FLOAT: Handling of floating−point constants

By default, floating−point constants are rounded to nearest, and IEEE denormals are supported. The following options can be set to alter this behaviour:

- FLOAT DAZ Flush denormals to zero
- FLOAT NODAZ Do not flush denormals to zero (default)
- FLOAT NEAR Round to nearest (default)
- FLOAT UP Round up (toward +Infinity)
- FLOAT DOWN Round down (toward –Infinity)
- FLOAT ZERO Round toward zero
- FLOAT DEFAULT Restore default settings

The standard macros __FLOAT_DAZ__, __FLOAT_ROUND__, and __FLOAT__ contain the current state, as long as the programmer has avoided the use of the brackeded primitive form, ([FLOAT]).

__FLOAT__ contains the full set of floating−point settings; this value can be saved away and invoked later to restore the setting.

Chapter 7: Output Formats

NASM is a portable assembler, designed to be able to compile on any ANSI C−supporting platform and produce output to run on a variety of Intel x86 operating systems. For this reason, it has a large number of available output formats, selected using the −f option on the NASM command line. Each of these formats, along with its extensions to the base NASM syntax, is detailed in this chapter.

As stated in [section 2.1.1](#page-18-0), NASM chooses a default name for your output file based on the input file name and the chosen output format. This will be generated by removing the extension (.asm, .s, or whatever you like to use) from the input file name, and substituting an extension defined by the output format. The extensions are given with each format below.

7.1 bin: Flat−Form Binary Output

The bin format does not produce object files: it generates nothing in the output file except the code you wrote. Such 'pure binary' files are used by MS−DOS: .COM executables and .SYS device drivers are pure binary files. Pure binary output is also useful for operating system and boot loader development.

The bin format supports multiple section names. For details of how NASM handles sections in the bin format, see [section 7.1.3.](#page-82-0)

Using the bin format puts NASM by default into 16−bit mode (see [section 6.1](#page-75-0)). In order to use bin to write 32−bit or 64−bit code, such as an OS kernel, you need to explicitly issue the BITS 32 or BITS 64 directive.

bin has no default output file name extension: instead, it leaves your file name as it is once the original extension has been removed. Thus, the default is for NASM to assemble binprog.asm into a binary file called binprog.

7.1.1 ORG: Binary File Program Origin

The bin format provides an additional directive to the list given in [chapter 6:](#page-75-1) ORG. The function of the ORG directive is to specify the origin address which NASM will assume the program begins at when it is loaded into memory.

For example, the following code will generate the longword 0x00000104:

 org 0x100 dd label

label:

Unlike the ORG directive provided by MASM−compatible assemblers, which allows you to jump around in the object file and overwrite code you have already generated, NASM's ORG does exactly what the directive says: *origin*. Its sole function is to specify one offset which is added to all internal address references within the section; it does not permit any of the trickery that MASM's version does. See [section 12.1.3](#page-127-0) for further comments.

7.1.2 bin Extensions to the SECTION Directive

The bin output format extends the SECTION (or SEGMENT) directive to allow you to specify the alignment requirements of segments. This is done by appending the ALIGN qualifier to the end of the section−definition line. For example,

section .data align=16

switches to the section .data and also specifies that it must be aligned on a 16–byte boundary.

The parameter to ALIGN specifies how many low bits of the section start address must be forced to zero. The alignment value given may be any power of two.

7.1.3 Multisection Support for the bin Format

The bin format allows the use of multiple sections, of arbitrary names, besides the "known" .text, .data, and .bss names.

- Sections may be designated progbits or nobits. Default is progbits (except .bss, which defaults to nobits, of course).
- Sections can be aligned at a specified boundary following the previous section with align=, or at an arbitrary byte−granular position with start=.
- Sections can be given a virtual start address, which will be used for the calculation of all memory references within that section with vstart=.
- Sections can be ordered using follows=<section> or vfollows=<section> as an alternative to specifying an explicit start address.
- Arguments to org, start, vstart, and align= are critical expressions. See [section 3.8.](#page-37-0) E.g. align=(1 << ALIGN_SHIFT) – ALIGN_SHIFT must be defined before it is used here.
- Any code which comes before an explicit SECTION directive is directed by default into the .text section.
- If an ORG statement is not given, ORG 0 is used by default.
- The .bss section will be placed after the last progbits section, unless start=, vstart=, follows=, or vfollows= has been specified.
- All sections are aligned on dword boundaries, unless a different alignment has been specified.
- Sections may not overlap.
- NASM creates the section. < secname>. start for each section, which may be used in your code.

7.1.4 Map Files

Map files can be generated in −f bin format by means of the [map] option. Map types of all (default), brief, sections, segments, or symbols may be specified. Output may be directed to stdout (default), stderr, or a specified file. E.g. [map symbols myfile.map]. No "user form" exists, the square brackets must be used.

7.2 ith: Intel Hex Output

The ith file format produces Intel hex−format files. Just as the bin format, this is a flat memory image format with no support for relocation or linking. It is usually used with ROM programmers and similar utilities.

All extensions supported by the bin file format is also supported by the ith file format.

ith provides a default output file−name extension of .ith.

7.3 srec: Motorola S−Records Output

The srec file format produces Motorola S−records files. Just as the bin format, this is a flat memory image format with no support for relocation or linking. It is usually used with ROM programmers and similar utilities.

All extensions supported by the bin file format is also supported by the srec file format.

srec provides a default output file−name extension of .srec.

7.4 obj: Microsoft OMF Object Files

The obj file format (NASM calls it obj rather than omf for historical reasons) is the one produced by MASM and TASM, which is typically fed to 16−bit DOS linkers to produce .EXE files. It is also the format used by OS/2.

obj provides a default output file−name extension of .obj.

obj is not exclusively a 16−bit format, though: NASM has full support for the 32−bit extensions to the format. In particular, 32−bit obj format files are used by Borland's Win32 compilers, instead of using Microsoft's newer win32 object file format.

The obj format does not define any special segment names: you can call your segments anything you like. Typical names for segments in obj format files are CODE, DATA and BSS.

If your source file contains code before specifying an explicit SEGMENT directive, then NASM will invent its own segment called __NASMDEFSEG for you.

When you define a segment in an obj file, NASM defines the segment name as a symbol as well, so that you can access the segment address of the segment. So, for example:

```
segment data 
dvar: dw 1234 
segment code 
function: 
       mov ax,data : jet segment address of data
       mov ds, ax \qquad ; and move it into DS
        inc word [dvar] ; now this reference will work 
        ret
```
The obj format also enables the use of the SEG and WRT operators, so that you can write code which does things like

```
extern foo 
     mov ax, seg foo ; get preferred segment of foo
      mov ds,ax 
     mov ax, data \qquad i a different segment
      mov es,ax 
      mov ax,[ds:foo] ; this accesses 'foo' 
      mov [es:foo wrt data],bx ; so does this
```
7.4.1 obj Extensions to the SEGMENT Directive

The obj output format extends the SEGMENT (or SECTION) directive to allow you to specify various properties of the segment you are defining. This is done by appending extra qualifiers to the end of the segment−definition line. For example,

segment code private align=16

defines the segment code, but also declares it to be a private segment, and requires that the portion of it described in this code module must be aligned on a 16−byte boundary.

The available qualifiers are:

- PRIVATE, PUBLIC, COMMON and STACK specify the combination characteristics of the segment. PRIVATE segments do not get combined with any others by the linker; PUBLIC and STACK segments get concatenated together at link time; and COMMON segments all get overlaid on top of each other rather than stuck end−to−end.
- ALIGN is used, as shown above, to specify how many low bits of the segment start address must be forced to zero. The alignment value given may be any power of two from 1 to 4096; in reality, the only values supported are 1, 2, 4, 16, 256 and 4096, so if 8 is specified it will be rounded up to 16, and 32, 64 and 128 will all be rounded up to 256, and so on. Note that alignment to 4096−byte boundaries is a PharLap extension to the format and may not be supported by all linkers.
- CLASS can be used to specify the segment class; this feature indicates to the linker that segments of the same class should be placed near each other in the output file. The class name can be any word, e.g. CLASS=CODE.
- OVERLAY, like CLASS, is specified with an arbitrary word as an argument, and provides overlay information to an overlay−capable linker.
- Segments can be declared as USE16 or USE32, which has the effect of recording the choice in the object file and also ensuring that NASM's default assembly mode when assembling in that segment is 16−bit or 32−bit respectively.
- When writing OS/2 object files, you should declare 32−bit segments as FLAT, which causes the default segment base for anything in the segment to be the special group FLAT, and also defines the group if it is not already defined.
- The obj file format also allows segments to be declared as having a pre−defined absolute segment address, although no linkers are currently known to make sensible use of this feature; nevertheless, NASM allows you to declare a segment such as SEGMENT SCREEN ABSOLUTE=0xB800 if you need to. The ABSOLUTE and ALIGN keywords are mutually exclusive.

NASM's default segment attributes are PUBLIC, ALIGN=1, no class, no overlay, and USE16.

7.4.2 GROUP: Defining Groups of Segments

The obj format also allows segments to be grouped, so that a single segment register can be used to refer to all the segments in a group. NASM therefore supplies the GROUP directive, whereby you can code

segment data

; some data

segment bss

; some uninitialized data

group dgroup data bss

which will define a group called dgroup to contain the segments data and bss. Like SEGMENT, GROUP causes the group name to be defined as a symbol, so that you can refer to a variable var in the data segment as var wrt data or as var wrt dgroup, depending on which segment value is currently in your segment register.

If you just refer to var, however, and var is declared in a segment which is part of a group, then NASM will default to giving you the offset of var from the beginning of the *group*, not the *segment*. Therefore SEG var, also, will return the group base rather than the segment base.

NASM will allow a segment to be part of more than one group, but will generate a warning if you do this. Variables declared in a segment which is part of more than one group will default to being relative to the first group that was defined to contain the segment.

A group does not have to contain any segments; you can still make WRT references to a group which does not contain the variable you are referring to. OS/2, for example, defines the special group FLAT with no segments in it.

7.4.3 UPPERCASE: Disabling Case Sensitivity in Output

Although NASM itself is case sensitive, some OMF linkers are not; therefore it can be useful for NASM to output single−case object files. The UPPERCASE format−specific directive causes all segment, group and symbol names that are written to the object file to be forced to upper case just before being written. Within a source file, NASM is still case–sensitive; but the object file can be written entirely in upper case if desired.

UPPERCASE is used alone on a line; it requires no parameters.

7.4.4 IMPORT: Importing DLL Symbols

The IMPORT format−specific directive defines a symbol to be imported from a DLL, for use if you are writing a DLL's import library in NASM. You still need to declare the symbol as EXTERN as well as using the IMPORT directive.

The IMPORT directive takes two required parameters, separated by white space, which are (respectively) the name of the symbol you wish to import and the name of the library you wish to import it from. For example:

import WSAStartup wsock32.dll

A third optional parameter gives the name by which the symbol is known in the library you are importing it from, in case this is not the same as the name you wish the symbol to be known by to your code once you have imported it. For example:

import asyncsel wsock32.dll WSAAsyncSelect

7.4.5 EXPORT: Exporting DLL Symbols

The EXPORT format−specific directive defines a global symbol to be exported as a DLL symbol, for use if you are writing a DLL in NASM. You still need to declare the symbol as GLOBAL as well as using the EXPORT directive.

EXPORT takes one required parameter, which is the name of the symbol you wish to export, as it was defined in your source file. An optional second parameter (separated by white space from the first) gives the *external* name of the symbol: the name by which you wish the symbol to be known to programs using the DLL. If this name is the same as the internal name, you may leave the second parameter off.

Further parameters can be given to define attributes of the exported symbol. These parameters, like the second, are separated by white space. If further parameters are given, the external name must also be specified, even if it is the same as the internal name. The available attributes are:

- resident indicates that the exported name is to be kept resident by the system loader. This is an optimisation for frequently used symbols imported by name.
- nodata indicates that the exported symbol is a function which does not make use of any initialized data.
- parm=NNN, where NNN is an integer, sets the number of parameter words for the case in which the symbol is a call gate between 32−bit and 16−bit segments.
- An attribute which is just a number indicates that the symbol should be exported with an identifying number (ordinal), and gives the desired number.

For example:

```
 export myfunc 
 export myfunc TheRealMoreFormalLookingFunctionName 
 export myfunc myfunc 1234 ; export by ordinal 
 export myfunc myfunc resident parm=23 nodata
```
7.4.6 ..start: Defining the Program Entry Point

OMF linkers require exactly one of the object files being linked to define the program entry point, where execution will begin when the program is run. If the object file that defines the entry point is assembled using NASM, you specify the entry point by declaring the special symbol ..start at the point where you wish execution to begin.

7.4.7 obj Extensions to the EXTERN Directive

If you declare an external symbol with the directive

extern foo

then references such as mov ax,foo will give you the offset of foo from its preferred segment base (as specified in whichever module foo is actually defined in). So to access the contents of foo you will usually need to do something like

This is a little unwieldy, particularly if you know that an external is going to be accessible from a given segment or group, say dgroup. So if DS already contained dgroup, you could simply code

mov ax,[foo wrt dgroup]

However, having to type this every time you want to access foo can be a pain; so NASM allows you to declare foo in the alternative form

extern foo:wrt dgroup

This form causes NASM to pretend that the preferred segment base of foo is in fact dgroup; so the expression seg foo will now return dgroup, and the expression foo is equivalent to foo wrt dgroup.

This default−WRT mechanism can be used to make externals appear to be relative to any group or segment in your program. It can also be applied to common variables: see [section 7.4.8.](#page-87-0)

7.4.8 obj Extensions to the COMMON Directive

The obj format allows common variables to be either near or far; NASM allows you to specify which your variables should be by the use of the syntax

common nearvar 2:near ; 'nearvar' is a near common common farvar 10:far ; and 'farvar' is far

Far common variables may be greater in size than 64Kb, and so the OMF specification says that they are declared as a number of *elements* of a given size. So a 10−byte far common variable could be declared as ten one−byte elements, five two−byte elements, two five−byte elements or one ten−byte element.

Some OMF linkers require the element size, as well as the variable size, to match when resolving common variables declared in more than one module. Therefore NASM must allow you to specify the element size on your far common variables. This is done by the following syntax:

If no element size is specified, the default is 1. Also, the FAR keyword is not required when an element size is specified, since only far commons may have element sizes at all. So the above declarations could equivalently be

common c_5by2 10:5 ; two five−byte elements common c_2by5 10:2 ; five two−byte elements

In addition to these extensions, the COMMON directive in obj also supports default−WRT specification like EXTERN does (explained in [section 7.4.7\)](#page-86-0). So you can also declare things like

common foo 10:wrt dgroup common bar 16:far 2:wrt data common baz 24:wrt data:6

7.5 win32: Microsoft Win32 Object Files

The win32 output format generates Microsoft Win32 object files, suitable for passing to Microsoft linkers such as Visual C++. Note that Borland Win32 compilers do not use this format, but use obj instead (see [section 7.4\)](#page-83-0).

win32 provides a default output file−name extension of .obj.

Note that although Microsoft say that Win32 object files follow the COFF (Common Object File Format) standard, the object files produced by Microsoft Win32 compilers are not compatible with COFF linkers such as DJGPP's, and vice versa. This is due to a difference of opinion over the precise semantics of PC−relative relocations. To produce COFF files suitable for DJGPP, use NASM's coff output format; conversely, the coff format does not produce object files that Win32 linkers can generate correct output from.

7.5.1 win32 Extensions to the SECTION Directive

Like the obj format, win32 allows you to specify additional information on the SECTION directive line, to control the type and properties of sections you declare. Section types and properties are generated automatically by NASM for the standard section names .text, .data and .bss, but may still be overridden by these qualifiers.

The available qualifiers are:

- code, or equivalently text, defines the section to be a code section. This marks the section as readable and executable, but not writable, and also indicates to the linker that the type of the section is code.
- data and bss define the section to be a data section, analogously to code. Data sections are marked as readable and writable, but not executable. data declares an initialized data section, whereas bss declares an uninitialized data section.
- rdata declares an initialized data section that is readable but not writable. Microsoft compilers use this section to place constants in it.
- info defines the section to be an informational section, which is not included in the executable file by the linker, but may (for example) pass information *to* the linker. For example, declaring an info–type section called .drectve causes the linker to interpret the contents of the section as command−line options.
- align=, used with a trailing number as in obj, gives the alignment requirements of the section. The maximum you may specify is 64: the Win32 object file format contains no means to request a greater section alignment than this. If alignment is not explicitly specified, the defaults are 16−byte alignment for code sections, 8−byte alignment for rdata sections and 4−byte alignment for data (and BSS) sections. Informational sections get a default alignment of 1 byte (no alignment), though the value does not matter.

The defaults assumed by NASM if you do not specify the above qualifiers are:

section .text code align=16 section .data data align=4 section .rdata rdata align=8 section .bss bss align=4

Any other section name is treated by default like . text.

7.5.2 win32: Safe Structured Exception Handling

Among other improvements in Windows XP SP2 and Windows Server 2003 Microsoft has introduced concept of "safe structured exception handling." General idea is to collect handlers' entry points in designated read−only table and have alleged entry point verified against this table prior exception control is passed to the handler. In order for an executable module to be equipped with such "safe exception handler table," all object modules on linker command line has to comply with certain criteria. If one single module among them does not, then the table in question is omitted and above mentioned run−time checks will not be performed for application in question. Table omission is by default silent and therefore can be easily overlooked. One can instruct linker to refuse to produce binary without such table by passing /safeseh command line option.

Without regard to this run−time check merits it's natural to expect NASM to be capable of generating modules suitable for /safeseh linking. From developer's viewpoint the problem is two−fold:

- how to adapt modules not deploying exception handlers of their own;
- how to adapt/develop modules utilizing custom exception handling;

Former can be easily achieved with any NASM version by adding following line to source code:

\$@feat.00 equ 1

As of version 2.03 NASM adds this absolute symbol automatically. If it's not already present to be precise. I.e. if for whatever reason developer would choose to assign another value in source file, it would still be perfectly possible.

Registering custom exception handler on the other hand requires certain "magic." As of version 2.03 additional directive is implemented, safeseh, which instructs the assembler to produce appropriately formatted input data for above mentioned "safe exception handler table." Its typical use would be:

```
section .text 
extern _MessageBoxA@16 
%if __NASM_VERSION_ID__ >= 0x02030000 
safeseh handler \qquad \qquad ; register handler as "safe handler"
%endif 
handler: 
        push DWORD 1 ; MB_OKCANCEL 
        push DWORD caption 
        push DWORD text 
        push DWORD 0 
        call _MessageBoxA@16 
       sub eax,1 ; incidentally suits as return value
                        ; for exception handler 
        ret 
global _main 
_main: 
        push DWORD handler 
        push DWORD [fs:0] 
        mov DWORD [fs:0],esp ; engage exception handler 
        xor eax,eax 
        mov eax,DWORD[eax] ; cause exception 
        pop DWORD [fs:0] ; disengage exception handler 
        add esp,4 
        ret 
text: db 'OK to rethrow, CANCEL to generate core dump',0 
caption:db 'SEGV',0 
section .drectve info 
        db '/defaultlib:user32.lib /defaultlib:msvcrt.lib '
```
As you might imagine, it's perfectly possible to produce .exe binary with "safe exception handler table" and yet engage unregistered exception handler. Indeed, handler is engaged by simply manipulating [fs:0] location at run−time, something linker has no power over, run−time that is. It should be explicitly mentioned that such failure to register handler's entry point with safeseh directive has undesired side effect at run−time. If exception is raised and unregistered handler is to be executed, the application is abruptly terminated without any notification whatsoever. One can argue that system could at least have logged some kind "non−safe exception handler in x.exe at address n" message in event log, but no, literally no notification is provided and user is left with no clue on what caused application failure.

Finally, all mentions of linker in this paragraph refer to Microsoft linker version 7.x and later. Presence of @feat.00 symbol and input data for "safe exception handler table" causes no backward incompatibilities and "safeseh" modules generated by NASM 2.03 and later can still be linked by earlier versions or non−Microsoft linkers.

7.6 win64: Microsoft Win64 Object Files

The win64 output format generates Microsoft Win64 object files, which is nearly 100% identical to the win32 object format [\(section 7.5\)](#page-87-1) with the exception that it is meant to target 64−bit code and the x86−64 platform altogether. This object file is used exactly the same as the win32 object format [\(section 7.5\)](#page-87-1), in NASM, with regard to this exception.

7.6.1 win64: Writing Position−Independent Code

While REL takes good care of RIP−relative addressing, there is one aspect that is easy to overlook for a Win64 programmer: indirect references. Consider a switch dispatch table:

```
 jmp qword [dsptch+rax*8] 
         ... 
dsptch: dq case0 
        dq case1 
         ...
```
Even a novice Win64 assembler programmer will soon realize that the code is not 64−bit savvy. Most notably linker will refuse to link it with

```
'ADDR32' relocation to '.text' invalid without /LARGEADDRESSAWARE:NO
```
So [s]he will have to split jmp instruction as following:

 lea rbx,[rel dsptch] jmp qword [rbx+rax*8]

What happens behind the scene is that effective address in lea is encoded relative to instruction pointer, or in perfectly position−independent manner. But this is only part of the problem! Trouble is that in .dll context caseN relocations will make their way to the final module and might have to be adjusted at .dll load time. To be specific when it can't be loaded at preferred address. And when this occurs, pages with such relocations will be rendered private to current process, which kind of undermines the idea of sharing .dll. But no worry, it's trivial to fix:

```
 lea rbx,[rel dsptch] 
        add rbx,[rbx+rax*8] 
        jmp rbx 
         ... 
dsptch: dq case0−dsptch 
        dq case1−dsptch 
         ...
```
NASM version 2.03 and later provides another alternative, wrt ..imagebase operator, which returns offset from base address of the current image, be it .exe or .dll module, therefore the name. For those

acquainted with PE−COFF format base address denotes start of IMAGE_DOS_HEADER structure. Here is how to implement switch with these image−relative references:

One can argue that the operator is redundant. Indeed, snippet before last works just fine with any NASM version and is not even Windows specific... The real reason for implementing wrt ..imagebase will become apparent in next paragraph.

It should be noted that wrt ..imagebase is defined as 32−bit operand only:

7.6.2 win64: Structured Exception Handling

Structured exception handing in Win64 is completely different matter from Win32. Upon exception program counter value is noted, and linker−generated table comprising start and end addresses of all the functions [in given executable module] is traversed and compared to the saved program counter. Thus so called UNWIND_INFO structure is identified. If it's not found, then offending subroutine is assumed to be "leaf" and just mentioned lookup procedure is attempted for its caller. In Win64 leaf function is such function that does not call any other function *nor* modifies any Win64 non−volatile registers, including stack pointer. The latter ensures that it's possible to identify leaf function's caller by simply pulling the value from the top of the stack.

While majority of subroutines written in assembler are not calling any other function, requirement for non−volatile registers' immutability leaves developer with not more than 7 registers and no stack frame, which is not necessarily what [s]he counted with. Customarily one would meet the requirement by saving non−volatile registers on stack and restoring them upon return, so what can go wrong? If [and only if] an exception is raised at run−time and no UNWIND_INFO structure is associated with such "leaf" function, the stack unwind procedure will expect to find caller's return address on the top of stack immediately followed by its frame. Given that developer pushed caller's non−volatile registers on stack, would the value on top point at some code segment or even addressable space? Well, developer can attempt copying caller's return address to the top of stack and this would actually work in some very specific circumstances. But unless developer can guarantee that these circumstances are always met, it's more appropriate to assume worst case scenario, i.e. stack unwind procedure going berserk. Relevant question is what happens then? Application is abruptly terminated without any notification whatsoever. Just like in Win32 case, one can argue that system could at least have logged "unwind procedure went berserk in x.exe at address n" in event log, but no, no trace of failure is left.

Now, when we understand significance of the UNWIND_INFO structure, let's discuss what's in it and/or how it's processed. First of all it is checked for presence of reference to custom language−specific exception handler. If there is one, then it's invoked. Depending on the return value, execution flow is resumed (exception is said to be "handled"), *or* rest of UNWIND_INFO structure is processed as following. Beside optional reference to custom handler, it carries information about current callee's stack frame and where non−volatile registers are saved. Information is detailed enough to be able to reconstruct contents of caller's non−volatile registers upon call to current callee. And so caller's context is reconstructed, and then unwind procedure is repeated, i.e. another UNWIND_INFO structure is associated, this time, with caller's instruction pointer, which is then checked for presence of reference to language−specific handler, etc. The procedure is recursively repeated till exception is handled. As last resort system "handles" it by generating memory core dump and terminating the application.

As for the moment of this writing NASM unfortunately does not facilitate generation of above mentioned detailed information about stack frame layout. But as of version 2.03 it implements building blocks for generating structures involved in stack unwinding. As simplest example, here is how to deploy custom exception handler for leaf function:

```
default rel 
section .text 
extern MessageBoxA 
handler: 
       sub rsp, 40
        mov rcx,0 
        lea rdx,[text] 
        lea r8,[caption] 
       mov r9,1 ; MB OKCANCEL
        call MessageBoxA 
       sub eax,1 ; incidentally suits as return value
                        ; for exception handler 
        add rsp,40 
        ret 
global main 
main: 
        xor rax,rax 
        mov rax,QWORD[rax] ; cause exception 
        ret 
main_end: 
text: db 'OK to rethrow, CANCEL to generate core dump',0 
caption:db 'SEGV',0 
section .pdata rdata align=4 
        dd main wrt ..imagebase 
       dd main end wrt ..imagebase
        dd xmain wrt ..imagebase 
section .xdata rdata align=8 
xmain: db 9,0,0,0 
        dd handler wrt ..imagebase 
section .drectve info 
        db '/defaultlib:user32.lib /defaultlib:msvcrt.lib '
```
What you see in . pdata section is element of the "table comprising start and end addresses of function" along with reference to associated UNWIND_INFO structure. And what you see in .xdata section is UNWIND_INFO structure describing function with no frame, but with designated exception handler. References are *required* to be image−relative (which is the real reason for implementing wrt ..imagebase operator). It should be noted that rdata align=n, as well as wrt ..imagebase, are optional in these two segments' contexts, i.e. can be omitted. Latter means that *all* 32−bit references, not only above listed required ones, placed into these two segments turn out image−relative. Why is it important to understand? Developer is allowed to append handler−specific data to UNWIND_INFO structure, and if [s]he adds a 32−bit reference, then [s]he will have to remember to adjust its value to obtain the real pointer.

As already mentioned, in Win64 terms leaf function is one that does not call any other function *nor* modifies any non−volatile register, including stack pointer. But it's not uncommon that assembler programmer plans to utilize every single register and sometimes even have variable stack frame. Is there anything one can do with bare building blocks? I.e. besides manually composing fully−fledged UNWIND_INFO structure, which would surely be considered error−prone? Yes, there is. Recall that exception handler is called first, before stack layout is analyzed. As it turned out, it's perfectly possible to manipulate current callee's context in custom handler in manner that permits further stack unwinding. General idea is that handler would not actually "handle" the exception, but instead restore callee's context, as it was at its entry point and thus mimic leaf function. In other words, handler would simply undertake part of unwinding procedure. Consider following example:

```
function:
```


The keyword is that up to magic point original rsp value remains in chosen volatile register and no non–volatile register, except for rsp, is modified. While past magic_point rsp remains constant till the very end of the function. In this case custom language−specific exception handler would look like this:

```
EXCEPTION_DISPOSITION handler (EXCEPTION_RECORD *rec,ULONG64 frame, 
         CONTEXT *context,DISPATCHER_CONTEXT *disp) 
{ ULONG64 *rsp; 
     if (context−>Rip<(ULONG64)magic_point) 
         rsp = (ULONG64 *)context−>Rax; 
     else 
     { rsp = ((ULONG64 **)context−>Rsp)[0]; 
         context−>Rbp = rsp[−3]; 
         context−>Rbx = rsp[−2]; 
        context->R15 = resp[-1];
```

```
 } 
     context−>Rsp = (ULONG64)rsp; 
     memcpy (disp−>ContextRecord,context,sizeof(CONTEXT)); 
     RtlVirtualUnwind(UNW_FLAG_NHANDLER,disp−>ImageBase, 
         dips−>ControlPc,disp−>FunctionEntry,disp−>ContextRecord, 
         &disp−>HandlerData,&disp−>EstablisherFrame,NULL); 
     return ExceptionContinueSearch; 
}
```
As custom handler mimics leaf function, corresponding UNWIND_INFO structure does not have to contain any information about stack frame and its layout.

7.7 coff: Common Object File Format

The coff output type produces COFF object files suitable for linking with the DJGPP linker.

coff provides a default output file−name extension of .o.

The coff format supports the same extensions to the SECTION directive as win32 does, except that the align qualifier and the info section type are not supported.

7.8 macho32 and macho64: Mach Object File Format

The macho32 and macho64 output formts produces Mach−O object files suitable for linking with the MacOS X linker. macho is a synonym for macho32.

macho provides a default output file−name extension of .o.

7.9 elf32, elf64, elfx32: Executable and Linkable Format Object Files

The elf32, elf64 and elfx32 output formats generate ELF32 and ELF64 (Executable and Linkable Format) object files, as used by Linux as well as Unix System V, including Solaris x86, UnixWare and SCO Unix. elf provides a default output file−name extension of .o. elf is a synonym for elf32.

The elfx32 format is used for the x32 ABI, which is a 32−bit ABI with the CPU in 64−bit mode.

7.9.1 ELF specific directive osabi

The ELF header specifies the application binary interface for the target operating system (OSABI). This field can be set by using the osabi directive with the numeric value (0−255) of the target system. If this directive is not used, the default value will be "UNIX System V ABI" (0) which will work on most systems which support ELF.

7.9.2 elf Extensions to the SECTION Directive

Like the obj format, elf allows you to specify additional information on the SECTION directive line, to control the type and properties of sections you declare. Section types and properties are generated automatically by NASM for the standard section names, but may still be overridden by these qualifiers.

The available qualifiers are:

• alloc defines the section to be one which is loaded into memory when the program is run. noalloc defines it to be one which is not, such as an informational or comment section.

- exec defines the section to be one which should have execute permission when the program is run. noexec defines it as one which should not.
- write defines the section to be one which should be writable when the program is run. nowrite defines it as one which should not.
- progbits defines the section to be one with explicit contents stored in the object file: an ordinary code or data section, for example, nobits defines the section to be one with no explicit contents given, such as a BSS section.
- \bullet align=, used with a trailing number as in \circ b i, gives the alignment requirements of the section.
- tls defines the section to be one which contains thread local variables.

The defaults assumed by NASM if you do not specify the above qualifiers are:

(Any section name other than those in the above table is treated by default like other in the above table. Please note that section names are case sensitive.)

7.9.3 Position−Independent Code: elf Special Symbols and WRT

The ELF specification contains enough features to allow position−independent code (PIC) to be written, which makes ELF shared libraries very flexible. However, it also means NASM has to be able to generate a variety of ELF specific relocation types in ELF object files, if it is to be an assembler which can write PIC.

Since ELF does not support segment−base references, the WRT operator is not used for its normal purpose; therefore NASM's elf output format makes use of WRT for a different purpose, namely the PIC−specific relocation types.

elf defines five special symbols which you can use as the right−hand side of the WRT operator to obtain PIC relocation types. They are ..gotpc, ..gotoff, ..got, ..plt and ..sym. Their functions are summarized here:

- Referring to the symbol marking the global offset table base using wrt . .gotpc will end up giving the distance from the beginning of the current section to the global offset table. (_GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_ is the standard symbol name used to refer to the GOT.) So you would then need to add \$\$ to the result to get the real address of the GOT.
- Referring to a location in one of your own sections using wrt ..gotoff will give the distance from the beginning of the GOT to the specified location, so that adding on the address of the GOT would give the real address of the location you wanted.
- Referring to an external or global symbol using wrt ..got causes the linker to build an entry *in* the GOT containing the address of the symbol, and the reference gives the distance from the beginning of the GOT to the entry; so you can add on the address of the GOT, load from the resulting address, and end up with the address of the symbol.
- Referring to a procedure name using wrt ..plt causes the linker to build a procedure linkage table entry for the symbol, and the reference gives the address of the PLT entry. You can only use this in contexts which would generate a PC−relative relocation normally (i.e. as the destination for CALL or JMP), since ELF contains no relocation type to refer to PLT entries absolutely.
- Referring to a symbol name using wrt ..sym causes NASM to write an ordinary relocation, but instead of making the relocation relative to the start of the section and then adding on the offset to the symbol, it will write a relocation record aimed directly at the symbol in question. The distinction is a necessary one due to a peculiarity of the dynamic linker.

A fuller explanation of how to use these relocation types to write shared libraries entirely in NASM is given in [section 9.2.](#page-116-0)

7.9.4 Thread Local Storage: elf Special Symbols and WRT

• In ELF32 mode, referring to an external or global symbol using wrt. . that causes the linker to build an entry *in* the GOT containing the offset of the symbol within the TLS block, so you can access the value of the symbol with code such as:

```
 mov eax,[tid wrt ..tlsie] 
 mov [gs:eax],ebx
```
• In ELF64 or ELFx32 mode, referring to an external or global symbol using wrt ..gottpoff causes the linker to build an entry *in* the GOT containing the offset of the symbol within the TLS block, so you can access the value of the symbol with code such as:

```
 mov rax,[rel tid wrt ..gottpoff] 
 mov rcx,[fs:rax]
```
7.9.5 elf Extensions to the GLOBAL Directive

ELF object files can contain more information about a global symbol than just its address: they can contain the size of the symbol and its type as well. These are not merely debugger conveniences, but are actually necessary when the program being written is a shared library. NASM therefore supports some extensions to the GLOBAL directive, allowing you to specify these features.

You can specify whether a global variable is a function or a data object by suffixing the name with a colon and the word function or data. (object is a synonym for data.) For example:

global hashlookup:function, hashtable:data

exports the global symbol hashlookup as a function and hashtable as a data object.

Optionally, you can control the ELF visibility of the symbol. Just add one of the visibility keywords: default, internal, hidden, or protected. The default is default of course. For example, to make hashlookup hidden:

global hashlookup:function hidden

You can also specify the size of the data associated with the symbol, as a numeric expression (which may involve labels, and even forward references) after the type specifier. Like this:

```
global hashtable:data (hashtable.end − hashtable)
```
hashtable:

db this, that, theother \cdot ; some data here

.end:

This makes NASM automatically calculate the length of the table and place that information into the ELF symbol table.

Declaring the type and size of global symbols is necessary when writing shared library code. For more information, see [section 9.2.4.](#page-118-0)

7.9.6 elf Extensions to the COMMON Directive

ELF also allows you to specify alignment requirements on common variables. This is done by putting a number (which must be a power of two) after the name and size of the common variable, separated (as usual) by a colon. For example, an array of doublewords would benefit from 4−byte alignment:

common dwordarray 128:4

This declares the total size of the array to be 128 bytes, and requires that it be aligned on a 4−byte boundary.

7.9.7 16−bit code and ELF

The ELF32 specification doesn't provide relocations for 8− and 16−bit values, but the GNU ld linker adds these as an extension. NASM can generate GNU−compatible relocations, to allow 16−bit code to be linked as ELF using GNU ld. If NASM is used with the −w+gnu−elf−extensions option, a warning is issued when one of these relocations is generated.

7.9.8 Debug formats and ELF

ELF provides debug information in STABS and DWARF formats. Line number information is generated for all executable sections, but please note that only the ".text" section is executable by default.

7.10 aout: Linux a.out Object Files

The aout format generates a , out object files, in the form used by early Linux systems (current Linux systems use ELF, see [section 7.9.](#page-94-0)) These differ from other a. out object files in that the magic number in the first four bytes of the file is different; also, some implementations of a.out, for example NetBSD's, support position−independent code, which Linux's implementation does not.

a.out provides a default output file−name extension of .o.

a.out is a very simple object format. It supports no special directives, no special symbols, no use of SEG or WRT, and no extensions to any standard directives. It supports only the three standard section names .text, .data and .bss.

7.11 aoutb: NetBSD/FreeBSD/OpenBSD a.out Object Files

The aoutb format generates a.out object files, in the form used by the various free BSD Unix clones, NetBSD, FreeBSD and OpenBSD. For simple object files, this object format is exactly the same as aout except for the magic number in the first four bytes of the file. However, the aoutb format supports position−independent code in the same way as the elf format, so you can use it to write BSD shared libraries.

aoutb provides a default output file−name extension of .o.

aoutb supports no special directives, no special symbols, and only the three standard section names .text, .data and .bss. However, it also supports the same use of WRT as elf does, to provide position−independent code relocation types. See [section 7.9.3](#page-95-0) for full documentation of this feature.

aoutb also supports the same extensions to the GLOBAL directive as elf does: see [section 7.9.5](#page-96-0) for documentation of this.

7.12 as86: Minix/Linux as86 Object Files

The Minix/Linux 16−bit assembler as86 has its own non−standard object file format. Although its companion linker 1d86 produces something close to ordinary a. out binaries as output, the object file format used to communicate between $a = 86$ and $1d86$ is not itself a.out.

NASM supports this format, just in case it is useful, as as86. as86 provides a default output file−name extension of .o.

as86 is a very simple object format (from the NASM user's point of view). It supports no special directives, no use of SEG or WRT, and no extensions to any standard directives. It supports only the three standard section names .text, .data and .bss. The only special symbol supported is ..start.

7.13 rdf: Relocatable Dynamic Object File Format

The rdf output format produces RDOFF object files. RDOFF (Relocatable Dynamic Object File Format) is a home−grown object−file format, designed alongside NASM itself and reflecting in its file format the internal structure of the assembler.

RDOFF is not used by any well–known operating systems. Those writing their own systems, however, may well wish to use RDOFF as their object format, on the grounds that it is designed primarily for simplicity and contains very little file−header bureaucracy.

The Unix NASM archive, and the DOS archive which includes sources, both contain an rdoff subdirectory holding a set of RDOFF utilities: an RDF linker, an RDF static−library manager, an RDF file dump utility, and a program which will load and execute an RDF executable under Linux.

rdf supports only the standard section names .text, .data and .bss.

7.13.1 Requiring a Library: The LIBRARY Directive

RDOFF contains a mechanism for an object file to demand a given library to be linked to the module, either at load time or run time. This is done by the LIBRARY directive, which takes one argument which is the name of the module:

library mylib.rdl

7.13.2 Specifying a Module Name: The MODULE Directive

Special RDOFF header record is used to store the name of the module. It can be used, for example, by run−time loader to perform dynamic linking. MODULE directive takes one argument which is the name of current module:

module mymodname

Note that when you statically link modules and tell linker to strip the symbols from output file, all module names will be stripped too. To avoid it, you should start module names with \$, like:

module \$kernel.core

7.13.3 rdf Extensions to the GLOBAL Directive

RDOFF global symbols can contain additional information needed by the static linker. You can mark a global symbol as exported, thus telling the linker do not strip it from target executable or library file. Like in ELF, you can also specify whether an exported symbol is a procedure (function) or data object.

Suffixing the name with a colon and the word export you make the symbol exported:

global sys_open:export

To specify that exported symbol is a procedure (function), you add the word proc or function after declaration:

global sys_open:export proc

Similarly, to specify exported data object, add the word data or object to the directive:

global kernel_ticks:export data

7.13.4 rdf Extensions to the EXTERN Directive

By default the EXTERN directive in RDOFF declares a "pure external" symbol (i.e. the static linker will complain if such a symbol is not resolved). To declare an "imported" symbol, which must be resolved later during a dynamic linking phase, RDOFF offers an additional import modifier. As in GLOBAL, you can also specify whether an imported symbol is a procedure (function) or data object. For example:

 library \$libc extern _open:import extern _printf:import proc extern _errno:import data

Here the directive LIBRARY is also included, which gives the dynamic linker a hint as to where to find requested symbols.

7.14 dbg: Debugging Format

The dbg output format is not built into NASM in the default configuration. If you are building your own NASM executable from the sources, you can define OF_DBG in output/outform.h or on the compiler command line, and obtain the dbg output format.

The dbg format does not output an object file as such; instead, it outputs a text file which contains a complete list of all the transactions between the main body of NASM and the output−format back end module. It is primarily intended to aid people who want to write their own output drivers, so that they can get a clearer idea of the various requests the main program makes of the output driver, and in what order they happen.

For simple files, one can easily use the dbg format like this:

nasm −f dbg filename.asm

which will generate a diagnostic file called filename.dbq. However, this will not work well on files which were designed for a different object format, because each object format defines its own macros (usually user−level forms of directives), and those macros will not be defined in the dbg format. Therefore it can be useful to run NASM twice, in order to do the preprocessing with the native object format selected:

nasm −e −f rdf −o rdfprog.i rdfprog.asm nasm −a −f dbg rdfprog.i

This preprocesses rdfprog.asm into rdfprog.i, keeping the rdf object format selected in order to make sure RDF special directives are converted into primitive form correctly. Then the preprocessed source is fed through the dbg format to generate the final diagnostic output.

This workaround will still typically not work for programs intended for obj format, because the obj SEGMENT and GROUP directives have side effects of defining the segment and group names as symbols; dbg will not do this, so the program will not assemble. You will have to work around that by defining the symbols yourself (using EXTERN, for example) if you really need to get a dbg trace of an obj–specific source file.

dbg accepts any section name and any directives at all, and logs them all to its output file.

Chapter 8: Writing 16−bit Code (DOS, Windows 3/3.1)

This chapter attempts to cover some of the common issues encountered when writing 16−bit code to run under MS−DOS or Windows 3.x. It covers how to link programs to produce .EXE or .COM files, how to write .SYS device drivers, and how to interface assembly language code with 16−bit C compilers and with Borland Pascal.

8.1 Producing .EXE Files

Any large program written under DOS needs to be built as a .EXE file: only .EXE files have the necessary internal structure required to span more than one 64K segment. Windows programs, also, have to be built as .EXE files, since Windows does not support the .COM format.

In general, you generate .EXE files by using the obj output format to produce one or more .OBJ files, and then linking them together using a linker. However, NASM also supports the direct generation of simple DOS .EXE files using the bin output format (by using DB and DW to construct the .EXE file header), and a macro package is supplied to do this. Thanks to Yann Guidon for contributing the code for this.

NASM may also support .EXE natively as another output format in future releases.

8.1.1 Using the obj Format To Generate .EXE Files

This section describes the usual method of generating .EXE files by linking .OBJ files together.

Most 16−bit programming language packages come with a suitable linker; if you have none of these, there is a free linker called VAL, available in LZH archive format from [x2ftp.oulu.fi](ftp://x2ftp.oulu.fi/pub/msdos/programming/lang/). An LZH archiver can be found at [ftp.simtel.net](ftp://ftp.simtel.net/pub/simtelnet/msdos/arcers). There is another 'free' linker (though this one doesn't come with sources) called FREELINK, available from [www.pcorner.com](http://www.pcorner.com/tpc/old/3-101.html). A third, djlink, written by DJ Delorie, is available at [www.delorie.com](http://www.delorie.com/djgpp/16bit/djlink/). A fourth linker, ALINK, written by Anthony A.J. Williams, is available at alink.sourceforge.net.

When linking several . OBJ files into a . EXE file, you should ensure that exactly one of them has a start point defined (using the ..start special symbol defined by the obj format: see [section 7.4.6\)](#page-86-1). If no module defines a start point, the linker will not know what value to give the entry−point field in the output file header; if more than one defines a start point, the linker will not know *which* value to use.

An example of a NASM source file which can be assembled to a . OBJ file and linked on its own to a . EXE is given here. It demonstrates the basic principles of defining a stack, initialising the segment registers, and declaring a start point. This file is also provided in the test subdirectory of the NASM archives, under the name objexe.asm.

```
segment code
```
..start:

This initial piece of code sets up DS to point to the data segment, and initializes SS and SP to point to the top of the provided stack. Notice that interrupts are implicitly disabled for one instruction after a move into SS, precisely for this situation, so that there's no chance of an interrupt occurring between the loads of SS and SP and not having a stack to execute on.

Note also that the special symbol ..start is defined at the beginning of this code, which means that will be the entry point into the resulting executable file.

> mov dx,hello mov ah,9 int 0x21

The above is the main program: load $DS:DX$ with a pointer to the greeting message (hello is implicitly relative to the segment data, which was loaded into DS in the setup code, so the full pointer is valid), and call the DOS print−string function.

> mov ax,0x4c00 int 0x21

This terminates the program using another DOS system call.

segment data

hello: db 'hello, world', 13, 10, '\$'

The data segment contains the string we want to display.

```
segment stack stack 
          resb 64 
stacktop:
```
The above code declares a stack segment containing 64 bytes of uninitialized stack space, and points stacktop at the top of it. The directive segment stack stack defines a segment *called* stack, and also of *type* STACK. The latter is not necessary to the correct running of the program, but linkers are likely to issue warnings or errors if your program has no segment of type STACK.

The above file, when assembled into a .OBJ file, will link on its own to a valid .EXE file, which when run will print 'hello, world' and then exit.

8.1.2 Using the bin Format To Generate .EXE Files

The .EXE file format is simple enough that it's possible to build a .EXE file by writing a pure−binary program and sticking a 32−byte header on the front. This header is simple enough that it can be generated using DB and DW commands by NASM itself, so that you can use the bin output format to directly generate .EXE files.

Included in the NASM archives, in the misc subdirectory, is a file exebin.mac of macros. It defines three macros: EXE_begin, EXE_stack and EXE_end.

To produce a .EXE file using this method, you should start by using %include to load the exebin.mac macro package into your source file. You should then issue the EXE_begin macro call (which takes no arguments) to generate the file header data. Then write code as normal for the bin format – you can use all three standard sections .text, .data and .bss. At the end of the file you should call the EXE_end macro (again, no arguments), which defines some symbols to mark section sizes, and these symbols are referred to in the header code generated by EXE_begin.

In this model, the code you end up writing starts at 0×100 , just like a . COM file – in fact, if you strip off the 32−byte header from the resulting .EXE file, you will have a valid .COM program. All the segment bases are the same, so you are limited to a 64K program, again just like a .COM file. Note that an ORG directive is issued by the EXE_begin macro, so you should not explicitly issue one of your own.

You can't directly refer to your segment base value, unfortunately, since this would require a relocation in the header, and things would get a lot more complicated. So you should get your segment base by copying it out of CS instead.

On entry to your .EXE file, SS:SP are already set up to point to the top of a 2Kb stack. You can adjust the default stack size of 2Kb by calling the EXE_stack macro. For example, to change the stack size of your program to 64 bytes, you would call EXE_stack 64.

A sample program which generates a .EXE file in this way is given in the test subdirectory of the NASM archive, as binexe.asm.

8.2 Producing .COM Files

While large DOS programs must be written as .EXE files, small ones are often better written as .COM files. .COM files are pure binary, and therefore most easily produced using the bin output format.

8.2.1 Using the bin Format To Generate .COM Files

.COM files expect to be loaded at offset 100h into their segment (though the segment may change). Execution then begins at 100h, i.e. right at the start of the program. So to write a .COM program, you would create a source file looking like

```
 org 100h 
section .text 
start: 
          ; put your code here 
section .data 
          ; put data items here 
section .bss
```
; put uninitialized data here

The bin format puts the .text section first in the file, so you can declare data or BSS items before beginning to write code if you want to and the code will still end up at the front of the file where it belongs.

The BSS (uninitialized data) section does not take up space in the .COM file itself: instead, addresses of BSS items are resolved to point at space beyond the end of the file, on the grounds that this will be free memory when the program is run. Therefore you should not rely on your BSS being initialized to all zeros when you run.

To assemble the above program, you should use a command line like

nasm myprog.asm −fbin −o myprog.com

The bin format would produce a file called myprog if no explicit output file name were specified, so you have to override it and give the desired file name.

8.2.2 Using the obj Format To Generate .COM Files

If you are writing a .COM program as more than one module, you may wish to assemble several .OBJ files and link them together into a .COM program. You can do this, provided you have a linker capable of outputting .COM files directly (TLINK does this), or alternatively a converter program such as EXE2BIN to transform the .EXE file output from the linker into a .COM file.

If you do this, you need to take care of several things:

- The first object file containing code should start its code segment with a line like RESB 100h. This is to ensure that the code begins at offset 100h relative to the beginning of the code segment, so that the linker or converter program does not have to adjust address references within the file when generating the .COM file. Other assemblers use an ORG directive for this purpose, but ORG in NASM is a format−specific directive to the bin output format, and does not mean the same thing as it does in MASM−compatible assemblers.
- You don't need to define a stack segment.
- All your segments should be in the same group, so that every time your code or data references a symbol offset, all offsets are relative to the same segment base. This is because, when a .COM file is loaded, all the segment registers contain the same value.

8.3 Producing .SYS Files

MS−DOS device drivers – .SYS files – are pure binary files, similar to .COM files, except that they start at origin zero rather than 100h. Therefore, if you are writing a device driver using the bin format, you do not need the ORG directive, since the default origin for bin is zero. Similarly, if you are using obj, you do not need the RESB 100h at the start of your code segment.

.SYS files start with a header structure, containing pointers to the various routines inside the driver which do the work. This structure should be defined at the start of the code segment, even though it is not actually code.

For more information on the format of .SYS files, and the data which has to go in the header structure, a list of books is given in the Frequently Asked Questions list for the newsgroup [comp.os.msdos.programmer](news:comp.os.msdos.programmer).

8.4 Interfacing to 16−bit C Programs

This section covers the basics of writing assembly routines that call, or are called from, C programs. To do this, you would typically write an assembly module as a .OBJ file, and link it with your C modules to produce a mixed−language program.

8.4.1 External Symbol Names

C compilers have the convention that the names of all global symbols (functions or data) they define are formed by prefixing an underscore to the name as it appears in the C program. So, for example, the function a C programmer thinks of as printf appears to an assembly language programmer as _printf. This means that in your assembly programs, you can define symbols without a leading underscore, and not have to worry about name clashes with C symbols.

If you find the underscores inconvenient, you can define macros to replace the GLOBAL and EXTERN directives as follows:

```
%macro cglobal 1 
  global _%1 
   %define %1 _%1 
%endmacro 
%macro cextern 1 
  extern _%1 
   %define %1 _%1
```
%endmacro

(These forms of the macros only take one argument at a time; a %rep construct could solve this.)

If you then declare an external like this:

cextern printf

then the macro will expand it as

extern printf %define printf _printf

Thereafter, you can reference printf as if it was a symbol, and the preprocessor will put the leading underscore on where necessary.

The cglobal macro works similarly. You must use cglobal before defining the symbol in question, but you would have had to do that anyway if you used GLOBAL.

Also see [section 2.1.27.](#page-25-0)

8.4.2 Memory Models

NASM contains no mechanism to support the various C memory models directly; you have to keep track yourself of which one you are writing for. This means you have to keep track of the following things:

- In models using a single code segment (tiny, small and compact), functions are near. This means that function pointers, when stored in data segments or pushed on the stack as function arguments, are 16 bits long and contain only an offset field (the CS register never changes its value, and always gives the segment part of the full function address), and that functions are called using ordinary near CALL instructions and return using RETN (which, in NASM, is synonymous with RET anyway). This means both that you should write your own routines to return with RETN, and that you should call external C routines with near CALL instructions.
- In models using more than one code segment (medium, large and huge), functions are far. This means that function pointers are 32 bits long (consisting of a 16−bit offset followed by a 16−bit segment), and that functions are called using CALL FAR (or CALL seg:offset) and return using RETF. Again, you should therefore write your own routines to return with RETF and use CALL FAR to call external routines.
- In models using a single data segment (tiny, small and medium), data pointers are 16 bits long, containing only an offset field (the DS register doesn't change its value, and always gives the segment part of the full data item address).
- In models using more than one data segment (compact, large and huge), data pointers are 32 bits long, consisting of a 16−bit offset followed by a 16−bit segment. You should still be careful not to modify DS in your routines without restoring it afterwards, but ES is free for you to use to access the contents of 32−bit data pointers you are passed.
- The huge memory model allows single data items to exceed 64K in size. In all other memory models, you can access the whole of a data item just by doing arithmetic on the offset field of the pointer you are given, whether a segment field is present or not; in huge model, you have to be more careful of your pointer arithmetic.
- In most memory models, there is a *default* data segment, whose segment address is kept in DS throughout the program. This data segment is typically the same segment as the stack, kept in SS, so that functions' local variables (which are stored on the stack) and global data items can both be accessed easily without changing DS. Particularly large data items are typically stored in other segments. However, some memory models (though not the standard ones, usually) allow the assumption that SS and DS hold the same value to be removed. Be careful about functions' local variables in this latter case.

In models with a single code segment, the segment is called TEXT, so your code segment must also go by this name in order to be linked into the same place as the main code segment. In models with a single data segment, or with a default data segment, it is called _DATA.

8.4.3 Function Definitions and Function Calls

The C calling convention in 16−bit programs is as follows. In the following description, the words *caller* and *callee* are used to denote the function doing the calling and the function which gets called.

- The caller pushes the function's parameters on the stack, one after another, in reverse order (right to left, so that the first argument specified to the function is pushed last).
- The caller then executes a CALL instruction to pass control to the callee. This CALL is either near or far depending on the memory model.
- The callee receives control, and typically (although this is not actually necessary, in functions which do not need to access their parameters) starts by saving the value of SP in BP so as to be able to use BP as a base pointer to find its parameters on the stack. However, the caller was probably doing this too, so part of the calling convention states that BP must be preserved by any C function. Hence the callee, if it is going to set up BP as a *frame pointer*, must push the previous value first.
- The callee may then access its parameters relative to BP. The word at [BP] holds the previous value of BP as it was pushed; the next word, at $[BF+2]$, holds the offset part of the return address, pushed implicitly by CALL. In a small−model (near) function, the parameters start after that, at [BP+4]; in a large−model (far) function, the segment part of the return address lives at [BP+4], and the parameters begin at [BP+6]. The leftmost parameter of the function, since it was pushed last, is accessible at this offset from BP; the others follow, at successively greater offsets. Thus, in a function such as printf which takes a variable number of parameters, the pushing of the parameters in reverse order means that the function knows where to find its first parameter, which tells it the number and type of the remaining ones.
- The callee may also wish to decrease SP further, so as to allocate space on the stack for local variables, which will then be accessible at negative offsets from BP.
- The callee, if it wishes to return a value to the caller, should leave the value in AL, AX or DX:AX depending on the size of the value. Floating−point results are sometimes (depending on the compiler) returned in ST0.
- Once the callee has finished processing, it restores SP from BP if it had allocated local stack space, then pops the previous value of BP, and returns via RETN or RETF depending on memory model.
- When the caller regains control from the callee, the function parameters are still on the stack, so it typically adds an immediate constant to SP to remove them (instead of executing a number of slow POP instructions). Thus, if a function is accidentally called with the wrong number of parameters due to a prototype mismatch, the stack will still be returned to a sensible state since the caller, which *knows* how many parameters it pushed, does the removing.

It is instructive to compare this calling convention with that for Pascal programs (described in [section 8.5.1](#page-110-0)). Pascal has a simpler convention, since no functions have variable numbers of parameters. Therefore the callee knows how many parameters it should have been passed, and is able to deallocate them from the stack itself by passing an immediate argument to the RET or RETF instruction, so the caller does not have to do it. Also, the parameters are pushed in left−to−right order, not right−to−left, which means that a compiler can give better guarantees about sequence points without performance suffering.

Thus, you would define a function in C style in the following way. The following example is for small model:

```
global _myfunc
```
_myfunc:

```
 push bp 
 mov bp,sp 
sub sp,0x40 ; 64 bytes of local stack space
 mov bx,[bp+4] ; first parameter to function 
 ; some more code 
mov sp, bp \cdot i undo "sub sp, 0x40" above
 pop bp 
 ret
```
For a large−model function, you would replace RET by RETF, and look for the first parameter at [BP+6] instead of [BP+4]. Of course, if one of the parameters is a pointer, then the offsets of *subsequent* parameters will change depending on the memory model as well: far pointers take up four bytes on the stack when passed as a parameter, whereas near pointers take up two.

At the other end of the process, to call a C function from your assembly code, you would do something like this:

```
extern printf
      ; and then, further down... 
      push word [myint] ; one of my integer variables 
     push word mystring \qquad ; pointer into my data segment
      call _printf 
     add sp, byte 4 ; 'byte' saves space
      ; then those data items... 
segment DATA
```


This piece of code is the small−model assembly equivalent of the C code

```
int myint = 1234;
 printf("This number −> %d <− should be 1234\n", myint);
```
In large model, the function−call code might look more like this. In this example, it is assumed that DS already holds the segment base of the segment _DATA. If not, you would have to initialize it first.

```
 push word [myint] 
push word seg mystring ; Now push the segment, and...
push word mystring \cdots offset of "mystring"
 call far _printf 
 add sp,byte 6
```
The integer value still takes up one word on the stack, since large model does not affect the size of the int data type. The first argument (pushed last) to printf, however, is a data pointer, and therefore has to contain a segment and offset part. The segment should be stored second in memory, and therefore must be pushed first. (Of course, PUSH DS would have been a shorter instruction than PUSH WORD SEG mystring, if DS was set up as the above example assumed.) Then the actual call becomes a far call, since functions expect far calls in large model; and SP has to be increased by 6 rather than 4 afterwards to make up for the extra word of parameters.

8.4.4 Accessing Data Items

To get at the contents of C variables, or to declare variables which C can access, you need only declare the names as GLOBAL or EXTERN. (Again, the names require leading underscores, as stated in [section 8.4.1](#page-104-0).) Thus, a C variable declared as int i can be accessed from assembler as

extern _i

mov $ax, [\underline{i}]$

And to declare your own integer variable which C programs can access as extern int j, you do this (making sure you are assembling in the _DATA segment, if necessary):

global _j

 $\overline{\mathbf{u}}$ dw 0

To access a C array, you need to know the size of the components of the array. For example, int variables are two bytes long, so if a C program declares an array as int $a[10]$, you can access a[3] by coding mov $ax, \lceil a+6 \rceil$. (The byte offset 6 is obtained by multiplying the desired array index, 3, by the size of the array element, 2.) The sizes of the C base types in 16−bit compilers are: 1 for char, 2 for short and int, 4 for long and float, and 8 for double.

To access a C data structure, you need to know the offset from the base of the structure to the field you are interested in. You can either do this by converting the C structure definition into a NASM structure definition (using STRUC), or by calculating the one offset and using just that.

To do either of these, you should read your C compiler's manual to find out how it organizes data structures. NASM gives no special alignment to structure members in its own STRUC macro, so you have to specify alignment yourself if the C compiler generates it. Typically, you might find that a structure like

```
struct { 
      char c; 
      int i; 
} foo;
```
might be four bytes long rather than three, since the int field would be aligned to a two−byte boundary. However, this sort of feature tends to be a configurable option in the C compiler, either using command−line options or #pragma lines, so you have to find out how your own compiler does it.

8.4.5 c16.mac: Helper Macros for the 16−bit C Interface

Included in the NASM archives, in the misc directory, is a file c16.mac of macros. It defines three macros: proc, arg and endproc. These are intended to be used for C−style procedure definitions, and they automate a lot of the work involved in keeping track of the calling convention.

(An alternative, TASM compatible form of arg is also now built into NASM's preprocessor. See [section 4.8](#page-63-0) for details.)

An example of an assembly function using the macro set is given here:

endproc

This defines 1 nearproc to be a procedure taking two arguments, the first (i) an integer and the second (j) a pointer to an integer. It returns $i + *j$.

Note that the arg macro has an EQU as the first line of its expansion, and since the label before the macro call gets prepended to the first line of the expanded macro, the EQU works, defining %\$i to be an offset from BP. A context−local variable is used, local to the context pushed by the proc macro and popped by the endproc macro, so that the same argument name can be used in later procedures. Of course, you don't *have* to do that.

The macro set produces code for near functions (tiny, small and compact−model code) by default. You can have it generate far functions (medium, large and huge−model code) by means of coding %define FARCODE. This changes the kind of return instruction generated by endproc, and also changes the starting point for the argument offsets. The macro set contains no intrinsic dependency on whether data pointers are far or not.

arg can take an optional parameter, giving the size of the argument. If no size is given, 2 is assumed, since it is likely that many function parameters will be of type int.

The large−model equivalent of the above function would look like this:

```
%define FARCODE 
proc _farproc 
%$i arg 
%$j arg 4 
       mov ax,[bp + <i>§</i>§i]mov bx, [bp + <i>§</i> $j]mov es, [bp + $$j + 2] add ax,[bx]
```
endproc

This makes use of the argument to the $\arg \max$ macro to define a parameter of size 4, because \exists is now a far pointer. When we load from j, we must load a segment and an offset.

8.5 Interfacing to Borland Pascal Programs

Interfacing to Borland Pascal programs is similar in concept to interfacing to 16−bit C programs. The differences are:

- The leading underscore required for interfacing to C programs is not required for Pascal.
- The memory model is always large: functions are far, data pointers are far, and no data item can be more than 64K long. (Actually, some functions are near, but only those functions that are local to a Pascal unit and never called from outside it. All assembly functions that Pascal calls, and all Pascal functions that assembly routines are able to call, are far.) However, all static data declared in a Pascal program goes into the default data segment, which is the one whose segment address will be in DS when control is passed to your assembly code. The only things that do not live in the default data segment are local variables (they live in the stack segment) and dynamically allocated variables. All data *pointers*, however, are far.
- The function calling convention is different described below.
- Some data types, such as strings, are stored differently.
- There are restrictions on the segment names you are allowed to use Borland Pascal will ignore code or data declared in a segment it doesn't like the name of. The restrictions are described below.

8.5.1 The Pascal Calling Convention

The 16−bit Pascal calling convention is as follows. In the following description, the words *caller* and *callee* are used to denote the function doing the calling and the function which gets called.

- The caller pushes the function's parameters on the stack, one after another, in normal order (left to right, so that the first argument specified to the function is pushed first).
- The caller then executes a far CALL instruction to pass control to the callee.
- The callee receives control, and typically (although this is not actually necessary, in functions which do not need to access their parameters) starts by saving the value of SP in BP so as to be able to use BP as a base pointer to find its parameters on the stack. However, the caller was probably doing this too, so part of the calling convention states that BP must be preserved by any function. Hence the callee, if it is going to set up BP as a frame pointer, must push the previous value first.
- The callee may then access its parameters relative to BP. The word at [BP] holds the previous value of BP as it was pushed. The next word, at [BP+2], holds the offset part of the return address, and the next one at [BP+4] the segment part. The parameters begin at [BP+6]. The rightmost parameter of the function, since it was pushed last, is accessible at this offset from BP; the others follow, at successively greater offsets.
- The callee may also wish to decrease SP further, so as to allocate space on the stack for local variables, which will then be accessible at negative offsets from BP.
- The callee, if it wishes to return a value to the caller, should leave the value in AL, AX or DX:AX depending on the size of the value. Floating−point results are returned in ST0. Results of type Real (Borland's own custom floating−point data type, not handled directly by the FPU) are returned in DX:BX:AX. To return a result of type String, the caller pushes a pointer to a temporary string before pushing the parameters, and the callee places the returned string value at that location. The pointer is not a parameter, and should not be removed from the stack by the RETF instruction.
- Once the callee has finished processing, it restores SP from BP if it had allocated local stack space, then pops the previous value of BP, and returns via RETF. It uses the form of RETF with an immediate parameter, giving the number of bytes taken up by the parameters on the stack. This causes the parameters to be removed from the stack as a side effect of the return instruction.
- When the caller regains control from the callee, the function parameters have already been removed from the stack, so it needs to do nothing further.

Thus, you would define a function in Pascal style, taking two Integer–type parameters, in the following way:

```
global myfunc 
myfunc: push bp 
       mov bp,sp 
      sub sp,0x40 ; 64 bytes of local stack space
       mov bx,[bp+8] ; first parameter to function 
       mov bx,[bp+6] ; second parameter to function 
        ; some more code 
      mov sp, bp \cdot i undo "sub sp, 0x40" above
       pop bp 
       retf 4 ; total size of params is 4
```
At the other end of the process, to call a Pascal function from your assembly code, you would do something like this:

```
extern SomeFunc
```

```
 ; and then, further down... 
 push word seg mystring ; Now push the segment, and... 
push word mystring \cdot \cdot \cdot offset of "mystring"
 push word [myint] ; one of my variables 
 call far SomeFunc
```
This is equivalent to the Pascal code

```
procedure SomeFunc(String: PChar; Int: Integer); 
     SomeFunc(@mystring, myint);
```
8.5.2 Borland Pascal Segment Name Restrictions

Since Borland Pascal's internal unit file format is completely different from OBJ, it only makes a very sketchy job of actually reading and understanding the various information contained in a real OBJ file when it links that in. Therefore an object file intended to be linked to a Pascal program must obey a number of restrictions:

- Procedures and functions must be in a segment whose name is either CODE, CSEG, or something ending in _TEXT.
- initialized data must be in a segment whose name is either CONST or something ending in _DATA.
- Uninitialized data must be in a segment whose name is either DATA, DSEG, or something ending in _BSS.
- Any other segments in the object file are completely ignored. GROUP directives and segment attributes are also ignored.

8.5.3 Using c16.mac With Pascal Programs

The c16.mac macro package, described in [section 8.4.5](#page-109-0), can also be used to simplify writing functions to be called from Pascal programs, if you code %define PASCAL. This definition ensures that functions are far (it implies FARCODE), and also causes procedure return instructions to be generated with an operand.

Defining PASCAL does not change the code which calculates the argument offsets; you must declare your function's arguments in reverse order. For example:

%define PASCAL

```
proc _pascalproc 
%$j arg 4 
%$i arg 
       mov ax, [bp + <i>§</i> $i]mov bx, [bp + $5j]mov es, [bp + <i>§</i> $j + 2] add ax,[bx]
```
endproc

This defines the same routine, conceptually, as the example in [section 8.4.5:](#page-109-0) it defines a function taking two arguments, an integer and a pointer to an integer, which returns the sum of the integer and the contents of the pointer. The only difference between this code and the large−model C version is that PASCAL is defined instead of FARCODE, and that the arguments are declared in reverse order.

Chapter 9: Writing 32−bit Code (Unix, Win32, DJGPP)

This chapter attempts to cover some of the common issues involved when writing 32−bit code, to run under Win32 or Unix, or to be linked with C code generated by a Unix−style C compiler such as DJGPP. It covers how to write assembly code to interface with 32−bit C routines, and how to write position−independent code for shared libraries.

Almost all 32−bit code, and in particular all code running under Win32, DJGPP or any of the PC Unix variants, runs in *flat* memory model. This means that the segment registers and paging have already been set up to give you the same 32−bit 4Gb address space no matter what segment you work relative to, and that you should ignore all segment registers completely. When writing flat−model application code, you never need to use a segment override or modify any segment register, and the code−section addresses you pass to CALL and JMP live in the same address space as the data−section addresses you access your variables by and the stack−section addresses you access local variables and procedure parameters by. Every address is 32 bits long and contains only an offset part.

9.1 Interfacing to 32−bit C Programs

A lot of the discussion in [section 8.4,](#page-104-1) about interfacing to 16−bit C programs, still applies when working in 32 bits. The absence of memory models or segmentation worries simplifies things a lot.

9.1.1 External Symbol Names

Most 32−bit C compilers share the convention used by 16−bit compilers, that the names of all global symbols (functions or data) they define are formed by prefixing an underscore to the name as it appears in the C program. However, not all of them do: the ELF specification states that C symbols do *not* have a leading underscore on their assembly−language names.

The older Linux a.out C compiler, all Win32 compilers, DJGPP, and NetBSD and FreeBSD, all use the leading underscore; for these compilers, the macros cextern and cglobal, as given in [section 8.4.1,](#page-104-0) will still work. For ELF, though, the leading underscore should not be used.

See also [section 2.1.27.](#page-25-0)

9.1.2 Function Definitions and Function Calls

The C calling convention in 32−bit programs is as follows. In the following description, the words *caller* and *callee* are used to denote the function doing the calling and the function which gets called.

- The caller pushes the function's parameters on the stack, one after another, in reverse order (right to left, so that the first argument specified to the function is pushed last).
- The caller then executes a near CALL instruction to pass control to the callee.
- The callee receives control, and typically (although this is not actually necessary, in functions which do not need to access their parameters) starts by saving the value of ESP in EBP so as to be able to use EBP as a base pointer to find its parameters on the stack. However, the caller was probably doing this too, so part of the calling convention states that EBP must be preserved by any C function. Hence the callee, if it is going to set up EBP as a frame pointer, must push the previous value first.
- The callee may then access its parameters relative to EBP. The doubleword at [EBP] holds the previous value of EBP as it was pushed; the next doubleword, at [EBP+4], holds the return address, pushed implicitly by CALL. The parameters start after that, at [EBP+8]. The leftmost parameter of the function, since it was pushed last, is accessible at this offset from EBP; the others follow, at successively greater offsets. Thus, in a function such as printf which takes a variable number of parameters, the pushing of the parameters in reverse order means that the function knows where to find its first parameter, which tells it the number and type of the remaining ones.
- The callee may also wish to decrease ESP further, so as to allocate space on the stack for local variables, which will then be accessible at negative offsets from EBP.
- The callee, if it wishes to return a value to the caller, should leave the value in AL, AX or EAX depending on the size of the value. Floating−point results are typically returned in ST0.
- Once the callee has finished processing, it restores ESP from EBP if it had allocated local stack space, then pops the previous value of EBP, and returns via RET (equivalently, RETN).
- When the caller regains control from the callee, the function parameters are still on the stack, so it typically adds an immediate constant to ESP to remove them (instead of executing a number of slow POP instructions). Thus, if a function is accidentally called with the wrong number of parameters due to a prototype mismatch, the stack will still be returned to a sensible state since the caller, which *knows* how many parameters it pushed, does the removing.

There is an alternative calling convention used by Win32 programs for Windows API calls, and also for functions called *by* the Windows API such as window procedures: they follow what Microsoft calls the __stdcall convention. This is slightly closer to the Pascal convention, in that the callee clears the stack by passing a parameter to the RET instruction. However, the parameters are still pushed in right−to−left order.

Thus, you would define a function in C style in the following way:

```
global _myfunc 
_myfunc: 
        push ebp 
        mov ebp,esp 
       sub esp,0x40 ; 64 bytes of local stack space
        mov ebx,[ebp+8] ; first parameter to function 
        ; some more code 
        leave ; mov esp,ebp / pop ebp 
        ret
```
At the other end of the process, to call a C function from your assembly code, you would do something like this:

```
extern printf
         ; and then, further down... 
        push dword [myint] ; one of my integer variables 
        push dword mystring ; pointer into my data segment 
        call _printf
```

```
add esp, byte 8 ; 'byte' saves space
        ; then those data items... 
segment _DATA 
myint dd 1234 
mystring db 'This number −> %d <− should be 1234',10,0
```
This piece of code is the assembly equivalent of the C code

```
int myint = 1234;
 printf("This number −> %d <− should be 1234\n", myint);
```
9.1.3 Accessing Data Items

To get at the contents of C variables, or to declare variables which C can access, you need only declare the names as GLOBAL or EXTERN. (Again, the names require leading underscores, as stated in [section 9.1.1](#page-113-0).) Thus, a C variable declared as int i can be accessed from assembler as

```
 extern _i 
 mov eax,[_i]
```
And to declare your own integer variable which C programs can access as extern int j, you do this (making sure you are assembling in the _DATA segment, if necessary):

 global _j j dd 0

To access a C array, you need to know the size of the components of the array. For example, int variables are four bytes long, so if a C program declares an array as int a[10], you can access a[3] by coding mov $ax, \begin{bmatrix} a+12 \end{bmatrix}$. (The byte offset 12 is obtained by multiplying the desired array index, 3, by the size of the array element, 4.) The sizes of the C base types in 32−bit compilers are: 1 for char, 2 for short, 4 for int, long and float, and 8 for double. Pointers, being 32−bit addresses, are also 4 bytes long.

To access a C data structure, you need to know the offset from the base of the structure to the field you are interested in. You can either do this by converting the C structure definition into a NASM structure definition (using STRUC), or by calculating the one offset and using just that.

To do either of these, you should read your C compiler's manual to find out how it organizes data structures. NASM gives no special alignment to structure members in its own STRUC macro, so you have to specify alignment yourself if the C compiler generates it. Typically, you might find that a structure like

```
struct { 
      char c; 
      int i; 
} foo;
```
might be eight bytes long rather than five, since the int field would be aligned to a four−byte boundary. However, this sort of feature is sometimes a configurable option in the C compiler, either using command−line options or #pragma lines, so you have to find out how your own compiler does it.

9.1.4 c32.mac: Helper Macros for the 32−bit C Interface

Included in the NASM archives, in the misc directory, is a file c32.mac of macros. It defines three macros: proc, arg and endproc. These are intended to be used for C−style procedure definitions, and they automate a lot of the work involved in keeping track of the calling convention.

An example of an assembly function using the macro set is given here:

endproc

This defines $_proc32$ to be a procedure taking two arguments, the first (i) an integer and the second (j) a pointer to an integer. It returns $i + *j$.

Note that the arg macro has an EQU as the first line of its expansion, and since the label before the macro call gets prepended to the first line of the expanded macro, the EQU works, defining %\$i to be an offset from BP. A context−local variable is used, local to the context pushed by the proc macro and popped by the endproc macro, so that the same argument name can be used in later procedures. Of course, you don't *have* to do that.

arg can take an optional parameter, giving the size of the argument. If no size is given, 4 is assumed, since it is likely that many function parameters will be of type int or pointers.

9.2 Writing NetBSD/FreeBSD/OpenBSD and Linux/ELF Shared Libraries

ELF replaced the older a.out object file format under Linux because it contains support for position−independent code (PIC), which makes writing shared libraries much easier. NASM supports the ELF position−independent code features, so you can write Linux ELF shared libraries in NASM.

NetBSD, and its close cousins FreeBSD and OpenBSD, take a different approach by hacking PIC support into the a. out format. NASM supports this as the aoutb output format, so you can write BSD shared libraries in NASM too.

The operating system loads a PIC shared library by memory–mapping the library file at an arbitrarily chosen point in the address space of the running process. The contents of the library's code section must therefore not depend on where it is loaded in memory.

Therefore, you cannot get at your variables by writing code like this:

```
 mov eax,[myvar] ; WRONG
```
Instead, the linker provides an area of memory called the *global offset table*, or GOT; the GOT is situated at a constant distance from your library's code, so if you can find out where your library is loaded (which is typically done using a CALL and POP combination), you can obtain the address of the GOT, and you can then load the addresses of your variables out of linker−generated entries in the GOT.

The *data* section of a PIC shared library does not have these restrictions: since the data section is writable, it has to be copied into memory anyway rather than just paged in from the library file, so as long as it's being copied it can be relocated too. So you can put ordinary types of relocation in the data section without too much worry (but see [section 9.2.4](#page-118-0) for a caveat).

9.2.1 Obtaining the Address of the GOT

Each code module in your shared library should define the GOT as an external symbol:

extern _GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_ ; in ELF extern __GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_ ; in BSD a.out

At the beginning of any function in your shared library which plans to access your data or BSS sections, you must first calculate the address of the GOT. This is typically done by writing the function in this form:

```
func: push ebp 
        mov ebp,esp 
        push ebx 
        call .get_GOT 
.get_GOT: 
        pop ebx 
        add ebx,_GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_+$$−.get_GOT wrt ..gotpc 
        ; the function body comes here 
        mov ebx,[ebp−4] 
        mov esp,ebp 
        pop ebp 
        ret
```
(For BSD, again, the symbol _GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE requires a second leading underscore.)

The first two lines of this function are simply the standard C prologue to set up a stack frame, and the last three lines are standard C function epilogue. The third line, and the fourth to last line, save and restore the EBX register, because PIC shared libraries use this register to store the address of the GOT.

The interesting bit is the CALL instruction and the following two lines. The CALL and POP combination obtains the address of the label .get_GOT, without having to know in advance where the program was loaded (since the CALL instruction is encoded relative to the current position). The ADD instruction makes use of one of the special PIC relocation types: GOTPC relocation. With the WRT ..gotpc qualifier specified, the symbol referenced (here _GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_, the special symbol assigned to the GOT) is given as an offset from the beginning of the section. (Actually, ELF encodes it as the offset from the operand field of the ADD instruction, but NASM simplifies this deliberately, so you do things the same way for both ELF and BSD.) So the instruction then *adds* the beginning of the section, to get the real address of the GOT, and subtracts the value of .get_GOT which it knows is in EBX. Therefore, by the time that instruction has finished, EBX contains the address of the GOT.

If you didn't follow that, don't worry: it's never necessary to obtain the address of the GOT by any other means, so you can put those three instructions into a macro and safely ignore them:

```
 call %%getgot 
 %%getgot: 
      pop ebx 
       add ebx,_GLOBAL_OFFSET_TABLE_+$$−%%getgot wrt ..gotpc
```
%macro get_GOT 0

%endmacro

9.2.2 Finding Your Local Data Items

Having got the GOT, you can then use it to obtain the addresses of your data items. Most variables will reside in the sections you have declared; they can be accessed using the ..gotoff special WRT type. The way this works is like this:

lea eax,[ebx+myvar wrt ..gotoff]

The expression myvar wrt ..gotoff is calculated, when the shared library is linked, to be the offset to the local variable myvar from the beginning of the GOT. Therefore, adding it to EBX as above will place the real address of myvar in EAX.

If you declare variables as GLOBAL without specifying a size for them, they are shared between code modules in the library, but do not get exported from the library to the program that loaded it. They will still be in your ordinary data and BSS sections, so you can access them in the same way as local variables, using the above ..gotoff mechanism.

Note that due to a peculiarity of the way BSD a . out format handles this relocation type, there must be at least one non−local symbol in the same section as the address you're trying to access.

9.2.3 Finding External and Common Data Items

If your library needs to get at an external variable (external to the *library*, not just to one of the modules within it), you must use the . got type to get at it. The . got type, instead of giving you the offset from the GOT base to the variable, gives you the offset from the GOT base to a GOT *entry* containing the address of the variable. The linker will set up this GOT entry when it builds the library, and the dynamic linker will place the correct address in it at load time. So to obtain the address of an external variable extvar in EAX, you would code

mov eax,[ebx+extvar wrt ..got]

This loads the address of extvar out of an entry in the GOT. The linker, when it builds the shared library, collects together every relocation of type ..got, and builds the GOT so as to ensure it has every necessary entry present.

Common variables must also be accessed in this way.

9.2.4 Exporting Symbols to the Library User

If you want to export symbols to the user of the library, you have to declare whether they are functions or data, and if they are data, you have to give the size of the data item. This is because the dynamic linker has to build procedure linkage table entries for any exported functions, and also moves exported data items away from the library's data section in which they were declared.

So to export a function to users of the library, you must use

global func:function ; declare it as a function func: push ebp

; etc.

And to export a data item such as an array, you would have to code

```
global array:data array.end−array ; give the size too 
array: resd 128 
.end:
```
Be careful: If you export a variable to the library user, by declaring it as GLOBAL and supplying a size, the variable will end up living in the data section of the main program, rather than in your library's data section, where you declared it. So you will have to access your own global variable with the ..got mechanism rather than ..gotoff, as if it were external (which, effectively, it has become).

Equally, if you need to store the address of an exported global in one of your data sections, you can't do it by means of the standard sort of code:

dataptr: dd global_data_item ; WRONG

NASM will interpret this code as an ordinary relocation, in which global_data_item is merely an offset from the beginning of the .data section (or whatever); so this reference will end up pointing at your data section instead of at the exported global which resides elsewhere.

Instead of the above code, then, you must write

dataptr: dd global data item wrt ..sym

which makes use of the special WRT type . . sym to instruct NASM to search the symbol table for a particular symbol at that address, rather than just relocating by section base.

Either method will work for functions: referring to one of your functions by means of

funcptr: dd my function

will give the user the address of the code you wrote, whereas

funcptr: dd my_function wrt ..sym

will give the address of the procedure linkage table for the function, which is where the calling program will *believe* the function lives. Either address is a valid way to call the function.

9.2.5 Calling Procedures Outside the Library

Calling procedures outside your shared library has to be done by means of a *procedure linkage table*, or PLT. The PLT is placed at a known offset from where the library is loaded, so the library code can make calls to the PLT in a position−independent way. Within the PLT there is code to jump to offsets contained in the GOT, so function calls to other shared libraries or to routines in the main program can be transparently passed off to their real destinations.

To call an external routine, you must use another special PIC relocation type, WRT ..plt. This is much easier than the GOT−based ones: you simply replace calls such as CALL printf with the PLT−relative version CALL printf WRT ..plt.

9.2.6 Generating the Library File

Having written some code modules and assembled them to . o files, you then generate your shared library with a command such as

ld −shared −o library.so module1.o module2.o # for ELF ld −Bshareable −o library.so module1.o module2.o # for BSD For ELF, if your shared library is going to reside in system directories such as /usr/lib or /lib, it is usually worth using the −soname flag to the linker, to store the final library file name, with a version number, into the library:

ld −shared −soname library.so.1 −o library.so.1.2 *.o

You would then copy library.so.1.2 into the library directory, and create library.so.1 as a symbolic link to it.

Chapter 10: Mixing 16 and 32 Bit Code

This chapter tries to cover some of the issues, largely related to unusual forms of addressing and jump instructions, encountered when writing operating system code such as protected−mode initialisation routines, which require code that operates in mixed segment sizes, such as code in a 16−bit segment trying to modify data in a 32−bit one, or jumps between different−size segments.

10.1 Mixed−Size Jumps

The most common form of mixed–size instruction is the one used when writing a 32–bit OS: having done your setup in 16−bit mode, such as loading the kernel, you then have to boot it by switching into protected mode and jumping to the 32−bit kernel start address. In a fully 32−bit OS, this tends to be the *only* mixed−size instruction you need, since everything before it can be done in pure 16−bit code, and everything after it can be pure 32−bit.

This jump must specify a 48−bit far address, since the target segment is a 32−bit one. However, it must be assembled in a 16−bit segment, so just coding, for example,

jmp 0x1234:0x56789ABC ; wrong!

will not work, since the offset part of the address will be truncated to $0x9ABC$ and the jump will be an ordinary 16−bit far one.

The Linux kernel setup code gets round the inability of as86 to generate the required instruction by coding it manually, using DB instructions. NASM can go one better than that, by actually generating the right instruction itself. Here's how to do it right:

jmp dword 0x1234:0x56789ABC ; right

The DWORD prefix (strictly speaking, it should come *after* the colon, since it is declaring the *offset* field to be a doubleword; but NASM will accept either form, since both are unambiguous) forces the offset part to be treated as far, in the assumption that you are deliberately writing a jump from a 16−bit segment to a 32−bit one.

You can do the reverse operation, jumping from a 32−bit segment to a 16−bit one, by means of the WORD prefix:

jmp word 0x8765:0x4321 ; 32 to 16 bit

If the WORD prefix is specified in 16−bit mode, or the DWORD prefix in 32−bit mode, they will be ignored, since each is explicitly forcing NASM into a mode it was in anyway.

10.2 Addressing Between Different−Size Segments

If your OS is mixed 16 and 32−bit, or if you are writing a DOS extender, you are likely to have to deal with some 16−bit segments and some 32−bit ones. At some point, you will probably end up writing code in a 16−bit segment which has to access data in a 32−bit segment, or vice versa.

If the data you are trying to access in a 32−bit segment lies within the first 64K of the segment, you may be able to get away with using an ordinary 16−bit addressing operation for the purpose; but sooner or later, you will want to do 32−bit addressing from 16−bit mode.

The easiest way to do this is to make sure you use a register for the address, since any effective address containing a 32−bit register is forced to be a 32−bit address. So you can do

> mov eax,offset_into_32_bit_segment_specified_by_fs mov dword [fs:eax],0x11223344

This is fine, but slightly cumbersome (since it wastes an instruction and a register) if you already know the precise offset you are aiming at. The x86 architecture does allow 32−bit effective addresses to specify nothing but a 4−byte offset, so why shouldn't NASM be able to generate the best instruction for the purpose?

It can. As in [section 10.1,](#page-121-0) you need only prefix the address with the DWORD keyword, and it will be forced to be a 32−bit address:

mov dword [fs:dword my_offset],0x11223344

Also as in [section 10.1,](#page-121-0) NASM is not fussy about whether the DWORD prefix comes before or after the segment override, so arguably a nicer−looking way to code the above instruction is

mov dword [dword fs:my_offset],0x11223344

Don't confuse the DWORD prefix *outside* the square brackets, which controls the size of the data stored at the address, with the one inside the square brackets which controls the length of the address itself. The two can quite easily be different:

mov word [dword 0x12345678],0x9ABC

This moves 16 bits of data to an address specified by a 32−bit offset.

You can also specify WORD or DWORD prefixes along with the FAR prefix to indirect far jumps or calls. For example:

call dword far [fs:word 0x4321]

This instruction contains an address specified by a 16−bit offset; it loads a 48−bit far pointer from that (16−bit segment and 32−bit offset), and calls that address.

10.3 Other Mixed−Size Instructions

The other way you might want to access data might be using the string instructions (LODSx, STOSx and so on) or the XLATB instruction. These instructions, since they take no parameters, might seem to have no easy way to make them perform 32−bit addressing when assembled in a 16−bit segment.

This is the purpose of NASM's a16, a32 and a64 prefixes. If you are coding LODSB in a 16−bit segment but it is supposed to be accessing a string in a 32−bit segment, you should load the desired address into ESI and then code

a32 lodsb

The prefix forces the addressing size to 32 bits, meaning that LODSB loads from [DS:ESI] instead of [DS:SI]. To access a string in a 16−bit segment when coding in a 32−bit one, the corresponding a16 prefix can be used.

The a16, a32 and a64 prefixes can be applied to any instruction in NASM's instruction table, but most of them can generate all the useful forms without them. The prefixes are necessary only for instructions with implicit addressing: CMPSx, SCASx, LODSx, STOSx, MOVSx, INSx, OUTSx, and XLATB. Also, the various push and pop instructions (PUSHA and POPF as well as the more usual PUSH and POP) can accept a16, a32

or a64 prefixes to force a particular one of SP, ESP or RSP to be used as a stack pointer, in case the stack segment in use is a different size from the code segment.

PUSH and POP, when applied to segment registers in 32−bit mode, also have the slightly odd behaviour that they push and pop 4 bytes at a time, of which the top two are ignored and the bottom two give the value of the segment register being manipulated. To force the 16−bit behaviour of segment−register push and pop instructions, you can use the operand−size prefix o16:

> o16 push ss o16 push ds

This code saves a doubleword of stack space by fitting two segment registers into the space which would normally be consumed by pushing one.

(You can also use the o32 prefix to force the 32−bit behaviour when in 16−bit mode, but this seems less useful.)

Chapter 11: Writing 64−bit Code (Unix, Win64)

This chapter attempts to cover some of the common issues involved when writing 64−bit code, to run under Win64 or Unix. It covers how to write assembly code to interface with 64−bit C routines, and how to write position−independent code for shared libraries.

All 64−bit code uses a flat memory model, since segmentation is not available in 64−bit mode. The one exception is the FS and GS registers, which still add their bases.

Position independence in 64−bit mode is significantly simpler, since the processor supports RIP–relative addressing directly; see the REL keyword [\(section 3.3\)](#page-31-0). On most 64−bit platforms, it is probably desirable to make that the default, using the directive DEFAULT REL [\(section 6.2\)](#page-76-0).

64−bit programming is relatively similar to 32−bit programming, but of course pointers are 64 bits long; additionally, all existing platforms pass arguments in registers rather than on the stack. Furthermore, 64−bit platforms use SSE2 by default for floating point. Please see the ABI documentation for your platform.

64−bit platforms differ in the sizes of the fundamental datatypes, not just from 32−bit platforms but from each other. If a specific size data type is desired, it is probably best to use the types defined in the Standard C header <inttypes.h>.

In 64−bit mode, the default instruction size is still 32 bits. When loading a value into a 32−bit register (but not an 8− or 16−bit register), the upper 32 bits of the corresponding 64−bit register are set to zero.

11.1 Register Names in 64−bit Mode

NASM uses the following names for general−purpose registers in 64−bit mode, for 8−, 16−, 32− and 64−bit references, respecitively:

 AL/AH, CL/CH, DL/DH, BL/BH, SPL, BPL, SIL, DIL, R8B−R15B AX, CX, DX, BX, SP, BP, SI, DI, R8W−R15W EAX, ECX, EDX, EBX, ESP, EBP, ESI, EDI, R8D−R15D RAX, RCX, RDX, RBX, RSP, RBP, RSI, RDI, R8−R15

This is consistent with the AMD documentation and most other assemblers. The Intel documentation, however, uses the names R8L−R15L for 8−bit references to the higher registers. It is possible to use those names by definiting them as macros; similarly, if one wants to use numeric names for the low 8 registers, define them as macros. The standard macro package altreg (see [section 5.1](#page-73-0)) can be used for this purpose.

11.2 Immediates and Displacements in 64−bit Mode

In 64−bit mode, immediates and displacements are generally only 32 bits wide. NASM will therefore truncate most displacements and immediates to 32 bits.

The only instruction which takes a full 64−bit immediate is:

MOV reg64,imm64

NASM will produce this instruction whenever the programmer uses MOV with an immediate into a 64−bit register. If this is not desirable, simply specify the equivalent 32−bit register, which will be automatically zero−extended by the processor, or specify the immediate as DWORD:

The length of these instructions are 10, 5 and 7 bytes, respectively.

The only instructions which take a full 64−bit *displacement* is loading or storing, using MOV, AL, AX, EAX or RAX (but no other registers) to an absolute 64−bit address. Since this is a relatively rarely used instruction (64−bit code generally uses relative addressing), the programmer has to explicitly declare the displacement size as OWORD:

```
 default abs
```

```
 mov eax,[foo] ; 32−bit absolute disp, sign−extended 
 mov eax,[a32 foo] ; 32−bit absolute disp, zero−extended 
 mov eax,[qword foo] ; 64−bit absolute disp 
 default rel 
 mov eax,[foo] ; 32−bit relative disp 
 mov eax,[a32 foo] ; d:o, address truncated to 32 bits(!) 
 mov eax,[qword foo] ; error 
 mov eax,[abs qword foo] ; 64−bit absolute disp
```
A sign−extended absolute displacement can access from –2 GB to +2 GB; a zero−extended absolute displacement can access from 0 to 4 GB.

11.3 Interfacing to 64−bit C Programs (Unix)

On Unix, the 64−bit ABI is defined by the document:

<http://www.nasm.us/links/unix64abi>

Although written for AT&T−syntax assembly, the concepts apply equally well for NASM−style assembly. What follows is a simplified summary.

The first six integer arguments (from the left) are passed in RDI, RSI, RDX, RCX, R8, and R9, in that order. Additional integer arguments are passed on the stack. These registers, plus RAX, R10 and R11 are destroyed by function calls, and thus are available for use by the function without saving.

Integer return values are passed in RAX and RDX, in that order.

Floating point is done using SSE registers, except for long double. Floating−point arguments are passed in XMM0 to XMM7; return is XMM0 and XMM1. long double are passed on the stack, and returned in ST0 and ST1.

All SSE and x87 registers are destroyed by function calls.

On 64−bit Unix, long is 64 bits.

Integer and SSE register arguments are counted separately, so for the case of

void foo(long a, double b, int c)

a is passed in RDI, b in XMM0, and c in ESI.

11.4 Interfacing to 64−bit C Programs (Win64)

The Win64 ABI is described at:

<http://www.nasm.us/links/win64abi>

What follows is a simplified summary.

The first four integer arguments are passed in RCX, RDX, R8 and R9, in that order. Additional integer arguments are passed on the stack. These registers, plus RAX, R10 and R11 are destroyed by function calls, and thus are available for use by the function without saving.

Integer return values are passed in RAX only.

Floating point is done using SSE registers, except for long double. Floating−point arguments are passed in XMM0 to XMM3; return is XMM0 only.

On Win64, long is 32 bits; long long or _int64 is 64 bits.

Integer and SSE register arguments are counted together, so for the case of

void foo(long long a, double b, int c)

a is passed in RCX, b in XMM1, and c in R8D.

Chapter 12: Troubleshooting

This chapter describes some of the common problems that users have been known to encounter with NASM, and answers them. It also gives instructions for reporting bugs in NASM if you find a difficulty that isn't listed here.

12.1 Common Problems

12.1.1 NASM Generates Inefficient Code

We sometimes get 'bug' reports about NASM generating inefficient, or even 'wrong', code on instructions such as ADD ESP, 8. This is a deliberate design feature, connected to predictability of output: NASM, on seeing ADD ESP, 8, will generate the form of the instruction which leaves room for a 32–bit offset. You need to code ADD ESP, BYTE 8 if you want the space–efficient form of the instruction. This isn't a bug, it's user error: if you prefer to have NASM produce the more efficient code automatically enable optimization with the −O option (see [section 2.1.22\)](#page-23-0).

12.1.2 My Jumps are Out of Range

Similarly, people complain that when they issue conditional jumps (which are SHORT by default) that try to jump too far, NASM reports 'short jump out of range' instead of making the jumps longer.

This, again, is partly a predictability issue, but in fact has a more practical reason as well. NASM has no means of being told what type of processor the code it is generating will be run on; so it cannot decide for itself that it should generate Jcc NEAR type instructions, because it doesn't know that it's working for a 386 or above. Alternatively, it could replace the out−of−range short JNE instruction with a very short JE instruction that jumps over a JMP NEAR; this is a sensible solution for processors below a 386, but hardly efficient on processors which have good branch prediction *and* could have used JNE NEAR instead. So, once again, it's up to the user, not the assembler, to decide what instructions should be generated. See [section](#page-23-0) [2.1.22.](#page-23-0)

12.1.3 ORG Doesn't Work

People writing boot sector programs in the bin format often complain that ORG doesn't work the way they'd like: in order to place the 0xAA55 signature word at the end of a 512−byte boot sector, people who are used to MASM tend to code

> ORG 0 ; some boot sector code ORG 510 DW 0xAA55

This is not the intended use of the ORG directive in NASM, and will not work. The correct way to solve this problem in NASM is to use the TIMES directive, like this:

ORG 0

```
 ; some boot sector code 
 TIMES 510−($−$$) DB 0 
 DW 0xAA55
```
The TIMES directive will insert exactly enough zero bytes into the output to move the assembly point up to 510. This method also has the advantage that if you accidentally fill your boot sector too full, NASM will catch the problem at assembly time and report it, so you won't end up with a boot sector that you have to disassemble to find out what's wrong with it.

12.1.4 TIMES Doesn't Work

The other common problem with the above code is people who write the TIMES line as

TIMES 510−\$ DB 0

by reasoning that \$ should be a pure number, just like 510, so the difference between them is also a pure number and can happily be fed to TIMES.

NASM is a *modular* assembler: the various component parts are designed to be easily separable for re−use, so they don't exchange information unnecessarily. In consequence, the bin output format, even though it has been told by the ORG directive that the .text section should start at 0, does not pass that information back to the expression evaluator. So from the evaluator's point of view, \$ isn't a pure number: it's an offset from a section base. Therefore the difference between $\frac{1}{5}$ and 510 is also not a pure number, but involves a section base. Values involving section bases cannot be passed as arguments to TIMES.

The solution, as in the previous section, is to code the TIMES line in the form

TIMES 510−(\$−\$\$) DB 0

in which $\frac{2}{3}$ and $\frac{2}{3}$ are offsets from the same section base, and so their difference is a pure number. This will solve the problem and generate sensible code.

12.2 Bugs

We have never yet released a version of NASM with any *known* bugs. That doesn't usually stop there being plenty we didn't know about, though. Any that you find should be reported firstly via the bugtracker at <http://www.nasm.us/> (click on "Bug Tracker"), or if that fails then through one of the contacts in [section 1.2.](#page-16-0)

Please read [section 2.2](#page-25-1) first, and don't report the bug if it's listed in there as a deliberate feature. (If you think the feature is badly thought out, feel free to send us reasons why you think it should be changed, but don't just send us mail saying 'This is a bug' if the documentation says we did it on purpose.) Then read [section 12.1](#page-127-0), and don't bother reporting the bug if it's listed there.

If you do report a bug, *please* give us all of the following information:

- What operating system you're running NASM under. DOS, Linux, NetBSD, Win16, Win32, VMS (I'd be impressed), whatever.
- If you're running NASM under DOS or Win32, tell us whether you've compiled your own executable from the DOS source archive, or whether you were using the standard distribution binaries out of the archive. If you were using a locally built executable, try to reproduce the problem using one of the standard binaries, as this will make it easier for us to reproduce your problem prior to fixing it.
- Which version of NASM you're using, and exactly how you invoked it. Give us the precise command line, and the contents of the NASMENV environment variable if any.
- Which versions of any supplementary programs you're using, and how you invoked them. If the problem only becomes visible at link time, tell us what linker you're using, what version of it you've got, and the exact linker command line. If the problem involves linking against object files generated by a compiler, tell us what compiler, what version, and what command line or options you used. (If you're compiling in an IDE, please try to reproduce the problem with the command−line version of the compiler.)
- If at all possible, send us a NASM source file which exhibits the problem. If this causes copyright problems (e.g. you can only reproduce the bug in restricted−distribution code) then bear in mind the following two points: firstly, we guarantee that any source code sent to us for the purposes of debugging NASM will be used *only* for the purposes of debugging NASM, and that we will delete all our copies of it as soon as we have found and fixed the bug or bugs in question; and secondly, we would prefer *not* to be mailed large chunks of code anyway. The smaller the file, the better. A three−line sample file that does nothing useful *except* demonstrate the problem is much easier to work with than a fully fledged ten−thousand−line program. (Of course, some errors *do* only crop up in large files, so this may not be possible.)
- A description of what the problem actually *is*. 'It doesn't work' is *not* a helpful description! Please describe exactly what is happening that shouldn't be, or what isn't happening that should. Examples might be: 'NASM generates an error message saying Line 3 for an error that's actually on Line 5'; 'NASM generates an error message that I believe it shouldn't be generating at all'; 'NASM fails to generate an error message that I believe it *should* be generating'; 'the object file produced from this source code crashes my linker'; 'the ninth byte of the output file is 66 and I think it should be 77 instead'.
- If you believe the output file from NASM to be faulty, send it to us. That allows us to determine whether our own copy of NASM generates the same file, or whether the problem is related to portability issues between our development platforms and yours. We can handle binary files mailed to us as MIME attachments, uuencoded, and even BinHex. Alternatively, we may be able to provide an FTP site you can upload the suspect files to; but mailing them is easier for us.
- Any other information or data files that might be helpful. If, for example, the problem involves NASM failing to generate an object file while TASM can generate an equivalent file without trouble, then send us *both* object files, so we can see what TASM is doing differently from us.

Appendix A: Ndisasm

The Netwide Disassembler, NDISASM

A.1 Introduction

The Netwide Disassembler is a small companion program to the Netwide Assembler, NASM. It seemed a shame to have an x86 assembler, complete with a full instruction table, and not make as much use of it as possible, so here's a disassembler which shares the instruction table (and some other bits of code) with NASM.

The Netwide Disassembler does nothing except to produce disassemblies of *binary* source files. NDISASM does not have any understanding of object file formats, like objdump, and it will not understand DOS . EXE files like debug will. It just disassembles.

A.2 Getting Started: Installation

See [section 1.3](#page-16-1) for installation instructions. NDISASM, like NASM, has a man page which you may want to put somewhere useful, if you are on a Unix system.

A.3 Running NDISASM

To disassemble a file, you will typically use a command of the form

ndisasm −b {16|32|64} filename

NDISASM can disassemble 16−, 32− or 64−bit code equally easily, provided of course that you remember to specify which it is to work with. If no –b switch is present, NDISASM works in 16–bit mode by default. The −u switch (for USE32) also invokes 32−bit mode.

Two more command line options are −r which reports the version number of NDISASM you are running, and −h which gives a short summary of command line options.

A.3.1 COM Files: Specifying an Origin

To disassemble a DOS .COM file correctly, a disassembler must assume that the first instruction in the file is loaded at address $0x100$, rather than at zero. NDISASM, which assumes by default that any file you give it is loaded at zero, will therefore need to be informed of this.

The −o option allows you to declare a different origin for the file you are disassembling. Its argument may be expressed in any of the NASM numeric formats: decimal by default, if it begins with '\$' or '0x' or ends in 'H' it's hex, if it ends in 'Q' it's octal, and if it ends in 'B' it's binary.

Hence, to disassemble a . COM file:

ndisasm −o100h filename.com

will do the trick.

A.3.2 Code Following Data: Synchronisation

Suppose you are disassembling a file which contains some data which isn't machine code, and *then* contains some machine code. NDISASM will faithfully plough through the data section, producing machine instructions wherever it can (although most of them will look bizarre, and some may have unusual prefixes, e.g. 'FS OR AX,0x240A'), and generating 'DB' instructions ever so often if it's totally stumped. Then it will reach the code section.

Supposing NDISASM has just finished generating a strange machine instruction from part of the data section, and its file position is now one byte *before* the beginning of the code section. It's entirely possible that another spurious instruction will get generated, starting with the final byte of the data section, and then the correct first instruction in the code section will not be seen because the starting point skipped over it. This isn't really ideal.

To avoid this, you can specify a 'synchronisation' point, or indeed as many synchronisation points as you like (although NDISASM can only handle 2147483647 sync points internally). The definition of a sync point is this: NDISASM guarantees to hit sync points exactly during disassembly. If it is thinking about generating an instruction which would cause it to jump over a sync point, it will discard that instruction and output a 'db' instead. So it *will* start disassembly exactly from the sync point, and so you *will* see all the instructions in your code section.

Sync points are specified using the −s option: they are measured in terms of the program origin, not the file position. So if you want to synchronize after 32 bytes of a .COM file, you would have to do

ndisasm −o100h −s120h file.com

rather than

ndisasm −o100h −s20h file.com

As stated above, you can specify multiple sync markers if you need to, just by repeating the −s option.

A.3.3 Mixed Code and Data: Automatic (Intelligent) Synchronisation

Suppose you are disassembling the boot sector of a DOS floppy (maybe it has a virus, and you need to understand the virus so that you know what kinds of damage it might have done you). Typically, this will contain a JMP instruction, then some data, then the rest of the code. So there is a very good chance of NDISASM being *misaligned* when the data ends and the code begins. Hence a sync point is needed.

On the other hand, why should you have to specify the sync point manually? What you'd do in order to find where the sync point would be, surely, would be to read the JMP instruction, and then to use its target address as a sync point. So can NDISASM do that for you?

The answer, of course, is yes: using either of the synonymous switches −a (for automatic sync) or −i (for intelligent sync) will enable auto−sync mode. Auto−sync mode automatically generates a sync point for any forward−referring PC−relative jump or call instruction that NDISASM encounters. (Since NDISASM is one−pass, if it encounters a PC−relative jump whose target has already been processed, there isn't much it can do about it...)

Only PC−relative jumps are processed, since an absolute jump is either through a register (in which case NDISASM doesn't know what the register contains) or involves a segment address (in which case the target code isn't in the same segment that NDISASM is working in, and so the sync point can't be placed anywhere useful).

For some kinds of file, this mechanism will automatically put sync points in all the right places, and save you from having to place any sync points manually. However, it should be stressed that auto−sync mode is *not* guaranteed to catch all the sync points, and you may still have to place some manually.

Auto−sync mode doesn't prevent you from declaring manual sync points: it just adds automatically generated ones to the ones you provide. It's perfectly feasible to specify −i *and* some −s options.

Another caveat with auto−sync mode is that if, by some unpleasant fluke, something in your data section should disassemble to a PC−relative call or jump instruction, NDISASM may obediently place a sync point in a totally random place, for example in the middle of one of the instructions in your code section. So you may end up with a wrong disassembly even if you use auto−sync. Again, there isn't much I can do about this. If you have problems, you'll have to use manual sync points, or use the −k option (documented below) to suppress disassembly of the data area.

A.3.4 Other Options

The −e option skips a header on the file, by ignoring the first N bytes. This means that the header is *not* counted towards the disassembly offset: if you give −e10 −o10, disassembly will start at byte 10 in the file, and this will be given offset 10, not 20.

The −k option is provided with two comma–separated numeric arguments, the first of which is an assembly offset and the second is a number of bytes to skip. This *will* count the skipped bytes towards the assembly offset: its use is to suppress disassembly of a data section which wouldn't contain anything you wanted to see anyway.

A.4 Bugs and Improvements

There are no known bugs. However, any you find, with patches if possible, should be sent to [nasm−bugs@lists.sourceforge.net](mailto:nasm-bugs@lists.sourceforge.net), or to the developer's site at <http://www.nasm.us/> and we'll try to fix them. Feel free to send contributions and new features as well.

Appendix B: Instruction List

B.1 Introduction

The following sections show the instructions which NASM currently supports. For each instruction, there is a separate entry for each supported addressing mode. The third column shows the processor type in which the instruction was introduced and, when appropriate, one or more usage flags.

B.1.1 Special instructions...

B.1.2 Conventional instructions

LLDT mem mem 286, PROT, PRIV 286, PROT, PRIV 286, PROT, PRIV 286, PRIV 286, PRIV 286, PRIV 386, UNDOC 286, UNDOC 8086,NOLONG 8086,NOLONG 8086,NOLONG 8086,NOLONG 8086,NOLONG 286, PROT, SW 6 286,PROT 2 386, PROT 4 X64, PROT, ND 386, PROT, SW 6 386, PROT 2 386, PROT 4 X64, PROT, ND EXELA, PROT, SW
EXELA, PROT X64,PROT 2 X64, PROT 4 X64, PROT 286, PROT, PRIV

PMULHRWC mmxreg,mmxrm PENT, MMX, CYRIX $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX \mathbb{P}^{em} , MMX PENT, MMX, CYRIX PENT, MMX, CYRIX PENT, MMX, CYRIX PENT, MMX, CYRIX 386,NOLONG 386,NOLONG 8086,UNDOC,ND 8086,NOLONG 186, NOLONG 386,NOLONG 186,NOLONG
8086 386,NOLONG $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX PENT, 3DNOW PENT, 3DNOW $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX PENT, MMX $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX PENT, MMX \mathbb{R}^m mmxrrm PENT, MMX PENT, MMX $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX PENT, MMX $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX PENT, MMX \mathbb{C} m PENT, MMX PENT, MMX \mathbb{P} PENT, MMX PENT, MMX \mathbb{C} m PENT, MMX PENT, MMX \mathbb{R}^m mmxreg, \mathbb{R}^m , \mathbb{R}^m \mathbb{P} PENT, MMX ϵ m PENT, MMX rm PENT, MMX, CYRIX \mathbb{P} ENT,MMX \mathbb{P} ENT,MMX $\mathbb{P}\text{ENT}$, MMX

B.1.3 Katmai Streaming SIMD instructions (SSE –– a.k.a. KNI, XMM, MMX2)

B.1.4 Introduced in Deschutes but necessary for SSE support

B.1.5 XSAVE group (AVX and extended state)

B.1.6 Generic memory operations

B.1.7 New MMX instructions introduced in Katmai

B.1.8 AMD Enhanced 3DNow! (Athlon) instructions

B.1.9 Willamette SSE2 Cacheability Instructions

B.1.10 Willamette MMX instructions (SSE2 SIMD Integer Instructions)

WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, ND WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE22 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE22 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE22 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO

B.1.11 Willamette Streaming SIMD instructions (SSE2)

WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 X64,SSE2,AR1 X64,SSE2,AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SD, AR1, ND WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SD, AR1 X64,SSE2,AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SD WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, AR1 X64,SSE2,AR1 $X64, SSE2, ARI$ WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 X64,SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO WILLAMETTE, SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO imm WILLAMETTE, SSE2 n WILLAMETTE,SSE2 WILLAMETTE, SSE2, SO

B.1.12 Prescott New Instructions (SSE3)

B.1.13 VMX Instructions

B.1.14 Extended Page Tables VMX instructions

B.1.15 Tejas New Instructions (SSSE3)

B.1.16 AMD SSE4A

B.1.17 New instructions in Barcelona

B.1.18 Penryn New Instructions (SSE4.1)

B.1.19 Nehalem New Instructions (SSE4.2)

B.1.20 Intel SMX

GETSEC KATMAI

B.1.21 Geode (Cyrix) 3DNow! additions

B.1.22 Intel new instructions in ???

B.1.23 Intel AES instructions

B.1.24 Intel AVX AES instructions

B.1.25 Intel AVX instructions

B.1.26 Intel Carry−Less Multiplication instructions (CLMUL)

B.1.27 Intel AVX Carry−Less Multiplication instructions (CLMUL)

B.1.28 Intel Fused Multiply−Add instructions (FMA)

B.1.29 Intel post−32 nm processor instructions

B.1.30 VIA (Centaur) security instructions

B.1.31 AMD Lightweight Profiling (LWP) instructions

B.1.32 AMD XOP and FMA4 instructions (SSE5)

B.1.33 Intel AVX2 instructions

B.1.34 Transactional Synchronization Extensions (TSX)

B.1.35 Intel BMI1 and BMI2 instructions

B.1.36 Systematic names for the hinting nop instructions

Appendix C: NASM Version History

C.1 NASM 2 Series

The NASM 2 series support x86−64, and is the production version of NASM since 2007.

C.1.1 Version 2.10.01

• Add missing VPMOVMSKB instruction with reg32, ymmreg operands.

C.1.2 Version 2.10

• When optimization is enabled, mov $r64$, imm now optimizes to the shortest form possible between:

To force a specific form, use the STRICT keyword, see [section 3.7.](#page-37-0)

- Add support for the Intel AVX2 instruction set.
- Add support for Bit Manipulation Instructions 1 and 2.
- Add support for Intel Transactional Synchronization Extensions (TSX).
- Add support for x32 ELF (32−bit ELF with the CPU in 64−bit mode.) See [section 7.9.](#page-94-0)
- Add support for bigendian UTF−16 and UTF−32. See [section 3.4.5.](#page-34-0)

C.1.3 Version 2.09.10

• Fix up NSIS script to protect uninstaller against registry keys absence or corruption. It brings in a few additional questions to a user during deinstallation procedure but still it is better than unpredictable file removal.

C.1.4 Version 2.09.09

- Fix initialization of section attributes of bin output format.
- Fix mach64 output format bug that crashes NASM due to NULL symbols.

C.1.5 Version 2.09.08

• Fix __OUTPUT_FORMAT__ assignment when output driver alias is used. For example when −f elf is used __OUTPUT_FORMAT__ must be set to elf, if −f elf32 is used __OUTPUT_FORMAT__ must be assigned accordingly, i.e. to elf32. The rule applies to all output driver aliases. See [section 4.12.6.](#page-68-0)

C.1.6 Version 2.09.07

- Fix attempts to close same file several times when −a option is used.
- Fixes for VEXTRACTF128, VMASKMOVPS encoding.

C.1.7 Version 2.09.06

• Fix missed section attribute initialization in bin output target.

C.1.8 Version 2.09.05

- Fix arguments encoding for VPEXTRW instruction.
- Remove invalid form of VPEXTRW instruction.
- Add VLDDQU as alias for VLDQQU to match specification.

C.1.9 Version 2.09.04

- Fix incorrect labels offset for VEX intructions.
- Eliminate bogus warning on implicit operand size override.
- $\frac{1}{2}$ if term could not handle 64 bit numbers.
- The COFF backend was limiting relocations number to 16 bits even if in real there were a way more relocations.

C.1.10 Version 2.09.03

- Print %macro name inside %rep blocks on error.
- Fix preprocessor expansion behaviour. It happened sometime too early and sometime simply wrong. Move behaviour back to the origins (down to NASM 2.05.01).
- Fix unitialized data dereference on OMF output format.
- Issue warning on unterminated $\frac{1}{6}$ construct.
- Fix for documentation typo.

C.1.11 Version 2.09.02

- Fix reversed tokens when %deftok produces more than one output token.
- Fix segmentation fault on disassembling some VEX instructions.
- Missing %endif did not always cause error.
- Fix typo in documentation.
- Compound context local preprocessor single line macro identifiers were not expanded early enough and as result lead to unresolved symbols.

C.1.12 Version 2.09.01

- Fix NULL dereference on missed %deftok second parameter.
- Fix NULL dereference on invalid %substr parameters.

C.1.13 Version 2.09

- Fixed assignment the magnitude of %rep counter. It is limited to 62 bits now.
- Fixed NULL dereference if argument of %strlen resolves to whitespace. For example if nonexistent macro parameter is used.
- %ifenv, %elifenv, %ifnenv, and %elifnenv directives introduced. See [section 4.4.9.](#page-56-0)
- Fixed NULL dereference if environment variable is missed.
- Updates of new AVX v7 Intel instructions.
- PUSH imm32 is now officially documented.
- Fix for encoding the LFS, LGS and LSS in 64−bit mode.
- Fixes for compatibility with OpenWatcom compiler and DOS 8.3 file format limitation.
- Macros parameters range expansion introduced. See [section 4.3.4.](#page-48-0)
- Backward compatibility on expanging of local sigle macros restored.
- 8 bit relocations for elf and bin output formats are introduced.
- Short intersegment jumps are permitted now.
- An alignment more than 64 bytes are allowed for win32, win64 output formats.
- SECTALIGN directive introduced. See [section 4.12.13.](#page-72-0)
- nojmp option introduced in smartalign package. See [section 5.2.](#page-73-0)
- Short aliases win, elf and macho for output formats are introduced. Each stands for win32, elf32 and macho32 accordingly.
- Faster handling of missing directives implemented.
- Various small improvements in documentation.
- No hang anymore if unable to open malloc.log file.
- The environments without vsnprintf function are able to build nasm again.
- AMD LWP instructions updated.
- Tighten EA checks. We warn a user if there overflow in EA addressing.
- Make −Ox the default optimization level. For the legacy behavior, specify −O0 explicitly. See [section](#page-23-0) [2.1.22.](#page-23-0)
- Environment variables read with %! or tested with %ifenv can now contain non−identifier characters if surrounded by quotes. See [section 4.10.2.](#page-66-0)
- Add a new standard macro package %use fp for floating−point convenience macros. See [section 5.3](#page-74-0).

C.1.14 Version 2.08.02

• Fix crash under certain circumstances when using the %+ operator.

C.1.15 Version 2.08.01

• Fix the s use statement, which was broken in 2.08.

C.1.16 Version 2.08

- A number of enhancements/fixes in macros area.
- Support for converting strings to tokens. See [section 4.1.9.](#page-44-0)
- Fuzzy operand size logic introduced.
- Fix COFF stack overrun on too long export identifiers.
- Fix Macho−O alignment bug.
- Fix crashes with –fwin32 on file with many exports.
- Fix stack overrun for too long [DEBUG id].
- Fix incorrect sbyte usage in IMUL (hit only if optimization flag passed).
- Append ending token for .stabs records in the ELF output format.
- New NSIS script which uses ModernUI and MultiUser approach.
- Visual Studio 2008 NASM integration (rules file).
- Warn a user if a constant is too long (and as result will be stripped).
- The obsoleted pre−XOP AMD SSE5 instruction set which was never actualized was removed.
- Fix stack overrun on too long error file name passed from the command line.
- Bind symbols to the .text section by default (ie in case if SECTION directive was omitted) in the ELF output format.
- Fix sync points array index wrapping.
- A few fixes for FMA4 and XOP instruction templates.
- Add AMD Lightweight Profiling (LWP) instructions.
- Fix the offset for %arg in 64−bit mode.
- An undefined local macro $(*)$; no longer matches a global macro with the same name.
- Fix NULL dereference on too long local labels.

C.1.17 Version 2.07

- NASM is now under the 2−clause BSD license. See [section 1.1.2.](#page-15-0)
- Fix the section type for the .strtab section in the elf64 output format.
- Fix the handling of COMMON directives in the obj output format.
- New ith and srec output formats; these are variants of the bin output format which output Intel hex and Motorola S−records, respectively. See [section 7.2](#page-83-0) and [section 7.3.](#page-83-1)
- rdf2ihx replaced with an enhanced rdf2bin, which can output binary, COM, Intel hex or Motorola S−records.
- The Windows installer now puts the NASM directory first in the PATH of the "NASM Shell".
- Revert the early expansion behavior of %+ to pre−2.06 behavior: %+ is only expanded late.
- Yet another Mach−O alignment fix.
- Don't delete the list file on errors. Also, include error and warning information in the list file.
- Support for 64−bit Mach−O output, see [section 7.8.](#page-94-1)
- Fix assert failure on certain operations that involve strings with high−bit bytes.

C.1.18 Version 2.06

- This release is dedicated to the memory of Charles A. Crayne, long time NASM developer as well as moderator of comp.lang.asm.x86 and author of the book *Serious Assembler*. We miss you, Chuck.
- Support for indirect macro expansion $(\xi$ [. . .]). See [section 4.1.3.](#page-42-0)
- & pop can now take an argument, see [section 4.7.1](#page-59-0).
- The argument to %use is no longer macro−expanded. Use %[...] if macro expansion is desired.
- Support for thread−local storage in ELF32 and ELF64. See [section 7.9.4.](#page-96-0)
- Fix crash on %ifmacro without an argument.
- Correct the arguments to the POPCNT instruction.
- Fix section alignment in the Mach−O format.
- Update AVX support to version 5 of the Intel specification.
- Fix the handling of accesses to context−local macros from higher levels in the context stack.
- Treat WAIT as a prefix rather than as an instruction, thereby allowing constructs like O16 FSAVE to work correctly.
- Support for structures with a non−zero base offset. See [section 4.12.10.](#page-69-0)
- Correctly handle preprocessor token concatenation (see [section 4.3.9\)](#page-51-0) involving floating−point numbers.
- The PINSR series of instructions have been corrected and rationalized.
- Removed AMD SSE5, replaced with the new XOP/FMA4/CVT16 (rev 3.03) spec.
- The ELF backends no longer automatically generate a .comment section.
- Add additional "well−known" ELF sections with default attributes. See [section 7.9.2.](#page-94-2)

C.1.19 Version 2.05.01

• Fix the −w/−W option parsing, which was broken in NASM 2.05.

C.1.20 Version 2.05

- Fix redundant REX.W prefix on JMP reg64.
- Make the behaviour of −O0 match NASM 0.98 legacy behavior. See [section 2.1.22.](#page-23-0)
- −w−user can be used to suppress the output of %warning directives. See [section 2.1.24.](#page-23-1)
- Fix bug where ALIGN would issue a full alignment datum instead of zero bytes.
- Fix offsets in list files.
- Fix %include inside multi−line macros or loops.
- Fix error where NASM would generate a spurious warning on valid optimizations of immediate values.
- Fix arguments to a number of the CVT SSE instructions.
- Fix RIP−relative offsets when the instruction carries an immediate.
- Massive overhaul of the ELF64 backend for spec compliance.
- Fix the Geode PFRCPV and PFRSQRTV instruction.
- Fix the SSE 4.2 CRC32 instruction.

C.1.21 Version 2.04

- Sanitize macro handing in the %error directive.
- New %warning directive to issue user−controlled warnings.
- % error directives are now deferred to the final assembly phase.
- New %fatal directive to immediately terminate assembly.
- New s strcat directive to join quoted strings together.
- New s use macro directive to support standard macro directives. See [section 4.6.4.](#page-59-1)
- Excess default parameters to %macro now issues a warning by default. See [section 4.3.](#page-45-0)
- Fix %ifn and %elifn.
- Fix nested %else clauses.
- Correct the handling of nested r eps.
- New %unmacro directive to undeclare a multi−line macro. See [section 4.3.12.](#page-52-0)
- Builtin macro __PASS__ which expands to the current assembly pass. See [section 4.12.9.](#page-69-1)
- __utf16__ and __utf32__ operators to generate UTF−16 and UTF−32 strings. See [section 3.4.5.](#page-34-0)
- Fix bug in case−insensitive matching when compiled on platforms that don't use the configure script. Of the official release binaries, that only affected the OS/2 binary.
- Support for x87 packed BCD constants. See [section 3.4.7.](#page-35-0)
- Correct the LTR and SLDT instructions in 64−bit mode.
- Fix unnecessary REX.W prefix on indirect jumps in 64−bit mode.
- Add AVX versions of the AES instructions (VAES...).
- Fix the 256–bit FMA instructions.
- Add 256−bit AVX stores per the latest AVX spec.
- VIA XCRYPT instructions can now be written either with or without REP, apparently different versions of the VIA spec wrote them differently.
- Add missing 64−bit MOVNTI instruction.
- Fix the operand size of VMREAD and VMWRITE.
- Numerous bug fixes, especially to the AES, AVX and VTX instructions.
- The optimizer now always runs until it converges. It also runs even when disabled, but doesn't optimize. This allows most forward references to be resolved properly.
- ϵ apush no longer needs a context identifier; omitting the context identifier results in an anonymous context.

C.1.22 Version 2.03.01

- Fix buffer overflow in the listing module.
- Fix the handling of hexadecimal escape codes in '...' strings.
- The Postscript/PDF documentation has been reformatted.
- The −F option now implies −g.

C.1.23 Version 2.03

- Add support for Intel AVX, CLMUL and FMA instructions, including YMM registers.
- dy, resy and yword for 32−byte operands.
- Fix some SSE5 instructions.
- Intel INVEPT, INVVPID and MOVBE instructions.
- Fix checking for critical expressions when the optimizer is enabled.
- Support the DWARF debugging format for ELF targets.
- Fix optimizations of signed bytes.
- Fix operation on bigendian machines.
- Fix buffer overflow in the preprocessor.
- SAFESEH support for Win32, IMAGEREL for Win64 (SEH).
- %? and %?? to refer to the name of a macro itself. In particular, %idefine keyword \$%? can be used to make a keyword "disappear".
- New options for dependency generation: −MD, −MF, −MP, −MT, −MQ.
- New preprocessor directives %pathsearch and %depend; INCBIN reimplemented as a macro.
- %include now resolves macros in a sane manner.
- %substr can now be used to get other than one−character substrings.
- New type of character/string constants, using backquotes ('...'), which support C−style escape sequences.
- %defstr and %idefstr to stringize macro definitions before creation.
- Fix forward references used in EQU statements.

C.1.24 Version 2.02

- Additional fixes for MMX operands with explicit qword, as well as (hopefully) SSE operands with oword.
- Fix handling of truncated strings with DO.
- Fix segfaults due to memory overwrites when floating−point constants were used.
- Fix segfaults due to missing include files.
- Fix OpenWatcom Makefiles for DOS and OS/2.
- Add autogenerated instruction list back into the documentation.
- ELF: Fix segfault when generating stabs, and no symbols have been defined.
- ELF: Experimental support for DWARF debugging information.
- New compile date and time standard macros.
- %ifnum now returns true for negative numbers.
- New %iftoken test for a single token.
- New %ifempty test for empty expansion.
- Add support for the XSAVE instruction group.
- Makefile for Netware/gcc.
- Fix issue with some warnings getting emitted way too many times.
- Autogenerated instruction list added to the documentation.

C.1.25 Version 2.01

- Fix the handling of MMX registers with explicit qword tags on memory (broken in 2.00 due to 64−bit changes.)
- Fix the PREFETCH instructions.
- Fix the documentation.
- Fix debugging info when using −f elf (backwards compatibility alias for −f elf32).
- Man pages for rdoff tools (from the Debian project.)
- ELF: handle large numbers of sections.
- Fix corrupt output when the optimizer runs out of passes.

C.1.26 Version 2.00

- Added c99 data−type compliance.
- Added general x86−64 support.
- Added win64 (x86−64 COFF) output format.
- Added __BITS__ standard macro.
- Renamed the elf output format to elf32 for clarity.
- Added elf64 and macho (MacOS X) output formats.
- Added Numeric constants in dq directive.
- Added oword, do and reso pseudo operands.
- Allow underscores in numbers.
- Added 8−, 16− and 128−bit floating−point formats.
- Added binary, octal and hexadecimal floating−point.
- Correct the generation of floating−point constants.
- Added floating−point option control.
- Added Infinity and NaN floating point support.
- Added ELF Symbol Visibility support.
- Added setting OSABI value in ELF header directive.
- Added Generate Makefile Dependencies option.
- Added Unlimited Optimization Passes option.
- Added %IFN and %ELIFN support.
- Added Logical Negation Operator.
- Enhanced Stack Relative Preprocessor Directives.
- Enhanced ELF Debug Formats.
- Enhanced Send Errors to a File option.
- Added SSSE3, SSE4.1, SSE4.2, SSE5 support.
- Added a large number of additional instructions.
- Significant performance improvements.
- −w+warning and −w−warning can now be written as –Wwarning and –Wno−warning, respectively. See [section 2.1.24.](#page-23-1)
- Add −w+error to treat warnings as errors. See [section 2.1.24.](#page-23-1)
- Add −w+all and −w−all to enable or disable all suppressible warnings. See [section 2.1.24.](#page-23-1)

C.2 NASM 0.98 Series

The 0.98 series was the production versions of NASM from 1999 to 2007.

C.2.1 Version 0.98.39

- fix buffer overflow
- fix outas86's . bss handling
- "make spotless" no longer deletes config.h.in.
- $*(el)$ if(n)idn insensitivity to string quotes difference (#809300).
- (nasm.c)__OUTPUT_FORMAT__ changed to string value instead of symbol.

C.2.2 Version 0.98.38

- Add Makefile for 16–bit DOS binaries under OpenWatcom, and modify mkdep.pl to be able to generate completely pathless dependencies, as required by OpenWatcom wmake (it supports path searches, but not explicit paths.)
- Fix the STR instruction.
- Fix the ELF output format, which was broken under certain circumstances due to the addition of stabs support.
- Quick−fix Borland format debug−info for −f obj
- Fix for $*$ rep with no arguments (#560568)
- Fix concatenation of preprocessor function call (#794686)
- Fix long label causes coredump (#677841)
- Use autoheader as well as autoconf to keep configure from generating ridiculously long command lines.
- Make sure that all of the formats which support debugging output actually will suppress debugging output when −g not specified.

C.2.3 Version 0.98.37

- Paths given in −I switch searched for incbin–ed as well as %include–ed files.
- Added stabs debugging for the ELF output format, patch from Martin Wawro.
- Fix output/outbin.c to allow origin > 80000000h.
- Make −U switch work.
- Fix the use of relative offsets with explicit prefixes, e.g. a32 loop foo.
- Remove backslash().
- Fix the SMSW and SLDT instructions.
- −O2 and −O3 are no longer aliases for −O10 and −O15. If you mean the latter, please say so! :)

C.2.4 Version 0.98.36

- Update rdoff librarian/archiver common rec docs!
- Fix signed/unsigned problems.
- Fix JMP FAR label and CALL FAR label.
- Add new multisection support map files fix align bug
- Fix sysexit, movhps/movlps reg,reg bugs in insns.dat
- O or O suffixes indicate octal
- Support Prescott new instructions (PNI).
- Cyrix XSTORE instruction.

C.2.5 Version 0.98.35

- Fix build failure on 16−bit DOS (Makefile.bc3 workaround for compiler bug.)
- Fix dependencies and compiler warnings.
- Add "const" in a number of places.
- Add –X option to specify error reporting format (use –Xvc to integrate with Microsoft Visual Studio.)
- Minor changes for code legibility.
- Drop use of tmpnam() in rdoff (security fix.)

C.2.6 Version 0.98.34

• Correct additional address−size vs. operand−size confusions.

- Generate dependencies for all Makefiles automatically.
- Add support for unimplemented (but theoretically available) registers such as tr0 and cr5. Segment registers 6 and 7 are called segr6 and segr7 for the operations which they can be represented.
- Correct some disassembler bugs related to redundant address−size prefixes. Some work still remains in this area.
- Correctly generate an error for things like "SEG eax".
- Add the JMPE instruction, enabled by "CPU IA64".
- Correct compilation on newer gcc/glibc platforms.
- Issue an error on things like "jmp far eax".

C.2.7 Version 0.98.33

- New __NASM_PATCHLEVEL__ and __NASM_VERSION_ID__ standard macros to round out the version−query macros. version.pl now understands X.YYplWW or X.YY.ZZplWW as a version number, equivalent to X.YY.ZZ.WW (or X.YY.0.WW, as appropriate).
- New keyword "strict" to disable the optimization of specific operands.
- Fix the handing of size overrides with JMP instructions (instructions such as "jmp dword foo".)
- Fix the handling of "ABSOLUTE label", where "label" points into a relocatable segment.
- Fix OBJ output format with lots of externs.
- More documentation updates.
- Add –Ov option to get verbose information about optimizations.
- Undo a braindead change which broke %elif directives.
- Makefile updates.

C.2.8 Version 0.98.32

- Fix NASM crashing when $*$ macro directives were left unterminated.
- Lots of documentation updates.
- Complete rewrite of the PostScript/PDF documentation generator.
- The MS Visual C++ Makefile was updated and corrected.
- Recognize .rodata as a standard section name in ELF.
- Fix some obsolete Perl4−isms in Perl scripts.
- Fix configure.in to work with autoconf 2.5x.
- Fix a couple of "make cleaner" misses.
- Make the normal "./configure && make" work with Cygwin.

C.2.9 Version 0.98.31

- Correctly build in a separate object directory again.
- Derive all references to the version number from the version file.
- New standard macros __NASM_SUBMINOR__ and __NASM_VER__ macros.
- Lots of Makefile updates and bug fixes.
- New $\frac{1}{2}$ fmacro directive to test for multiline macros.
- Documentation updates.
- Fixes for 16−bit OBJ format output.
- Changed the NASM environment variable to NASMENV.

C.2.10 Version 0.98.30

- Changed doc files a lot: completely removed old READMExx and Wishlist files, incorporating all information in CHANGES and TODO.
- I waited a long time to rename zoutieee.c to (original) outieee.c
- moved all output modules to output/ subdirectory.
- Added 'make strip' target to strip debug info from nasm & ndisasm.
- Added INSTALL file with installation instructions.
- Added –v option description to nasm man.
- Added dist makefile target to produce source distributions.
- 16−bit support for ELF output format (GNU extension, but useful.)

C.2.11 Version 0.98.28

• Fastcooked this for Debian's Woody release: Frank applied the INCBIN bug patch to 0.98.25alt and called it 0.98.28 to not confuse poor little apt−get.

C.2.12 Version 0.98.26

• Reorganised files even better from 0.98.25alt

C.2.13 Version 0.98.25alt

- Prettified the source tree. Moved files to more reasonable places.
- Added findleak.pl script to misc/ directory.
- Attempted to fix doc.

C.2.14 Version 0.98.25

- Line continuation character \setminus .
- Docs inadvertantly reverted "dos packaging".

C.2.15 Version 0.98.24p1

• FIXME: Someone, document this please.

C.2.16 Version 0.98.24

• Documentation – Ndisasm doc added to Nasm.doc.

C.2.17 Version 0.98.23

- Attempted to remove rdoff version1
- Lino Mastrodomenico's patches to preproc.c (%\$\$ bug?).

C.2.18 Version 0.98.22

• Update rdoff2 – attempt to remove v1.

C.2.19 Version 0.98.21

• Optimization fixes.

C.2.20 Version 0.98.20

• Optimization fixes.

C.2.21 Version 0.98.19

• H. J. Lu's patch back out.

C.2.22 Version 0.98.18

• Added ".rdata" to "−f win32".

C.2.23 Version 0.98.17

• H. J. Lu's "bogus elf" patch. (Red Hat problem?)

C.2.24 Version 0.98.16

• Fix whitespace before "[section ..." bug.

C.2.25 Version 0.98.15

- Rdoff changes (?).
- Fix fixes to memory leaks.

C.2.26 Version 0.98.14

• Fix memory leaks.

C.2.27 Version 0.98.13

• There was no 0.98.13

C.2.28 Version 0.98.12

- Update optimization (new function of "−O1")
- Changes to test/bintest.asm (?).

C.2.29 Version 0.98.11

- Optimization changes.
- Ndisasm fixed.
C.2.30 Version 0.98.10

• There was no 0.98.10

C.2.31 Version 0.98.09

- Add multiple sections support to "−f bin".
- Changed GLOBAL_TEMP_BASE in outelf.c from 6 to 15.
- Add "−v" as an alias to the "−r" switch.
- Remove "#ifdef" from Tasm compatibility options.
- Remove redundant size−overrides on "mov ds, ex", etc.
- Fixes to SSE2, other insns.dat (?).
- Enable uppercase "I" and "P" switches.
- Case insinsitive "seg" and "wrt".
- Update install.sh (?).
- Allocate tokens in blocks.
- Improve "invalid effective address" messages.

C.2.32 Version 0.98.08

- Add "%strlen" and "%substr" macro operators
- Fixed broken c16.mac.
- Unterminated string error reported.
- Fixed bugs as per 0.98bf

C.2.33 Version 0.98.09b with John Coffman patches released 28−Oct−2001

Changes from 0.98.07 release to 98.09b as of 28−Oct−2001

- More closely compatible with 0.98 when –O0 is implied or specified. Not strictly identical, since backward branches in range of short offsets are recognized, and signed byte values with no explicit size specification will be assembled as a single byte.
- More forgiving with the PUSH instruction. 0.98 requires a size to be specified always. 0.98.09b will imply the size from the current BITS setting (16 or 32).
- Changed definition of the optimization flag:

–O0 strict two−pass assembly, JMP and Jcc are handled more like 0.98, except that back− ward JMPs are short, if possible.

–O1 strict two−pass assembly, but forward branches are assembled with code guaranteed to reach; may produce larger code than –O0, but will produce successful assembly more often if branch offset sizes are not specified.

–O2 multi−pass optimization, minimize branch offsets; also will minimize signed immed− iate bytes, overriding size specification.

–O3 like –O2, but more passes taken, if needed

C.2.34 Version 0.98.07 released 01/28/01

• Added Stepane Denis' SSE2 instructions to a *working* version of the code – some earlier versions were based on broken code – sorry 'bout that. version "0.98.07"

01/28/01

• Cosmetic modifications to nasm.c, nasm.h, AUTHORS, MODIFIED

C.2.35 Version 0.98.06f released 01/18/01

• – Add "metalbrain"s jecxz bug fix in insns.dat – alter nasmdoc.src to match – version "0.98.06f"

C.2.36 Version 0.98.06e released 01/09/01

• Removed the "outforms.h" file – it appears to be someone's old backup of "outform.h". version "0.98.06e"

01/09/01

- fbk finally added the fix for the "multiple %includes bug", known since $7/27/99$ reported originally (?) and sent to us by Austin Lunnen – he reports that John Fine had a fix within the day. Here it is...
- Nelson Rush resigns from the group. Big thanks to Nelson for his leadership and enthusiasm in getting these changes incorporated into Nasm!
- fbk [list +], [list –] directives ineptly implemented, should be re−written or removed, perhaps.
- Brian Raiter / fbk "elfso bug" fix applied to aoutb format as well testing might be desirable...

08/07/00

- James Seter –postfix, –prefix command line switches.
- Yuri Zaporogets rdoff utility changes.

C.2.37 Version 0.98p1

- GAS−like palign (Panos Minos)
- FIXME: Someone, fill this in with details

C.2.38 Version 0.98bf (bug−fixed)

• Fixed – elf and aoutb bug – shared libraries – multiple "%include" bug in "−f obj" – jcxz, jecxz bug – unrecognized option bug in ndisasm

C.2.39 Version 0.98.03 with John Coffman's changes released 27−Jul−2000

- Added signed byte optimizations for the 0x81/0x83 class of instructions: ADC, ADD, AND, CMP, OR, SBB, SUB, XOR: when used as 'ADD reg16,imm' or 'ADD reg32,imm.' Also optimization of signed byte form of 'PUSH imm' and 'IMUL reg,imm'/'IMUL reg,reg,imm.' No size specification is needed.
- Added multi−pass JMP and Jcc offset optimization. Offsets on forward references will preferentially use the short form, without the need to code a specific size (short or near) for the branch. Added instructions for 'Jcc label' to use the form 'Jnotcc \$+3/JMP label', in cases where a short offset is out of bounds. If compiling for a 386 or higher CPU, then the 386 form of Jcc will be used instead.

This feature is controlled by a new command−line switch: "O", (upper case letter O). "−O0" reverts the assembler to no extra optimization passes, "−O1" allows up to 5 extra passes, and "−O2"(default), allows up to 10 extra optimization passes.

- Added a new directive: 'cpu XXX', where XXX is any of: 8086, 186, 286, 386, 486, 586, pentium, 686, PPro, P2, P3 or Katmai. All are case insensitive. All instructions will be selected only if they apply to the selected cpu or lower. Corrected a couple of bugs in cpu−dependence in 'insns.dat'.
- Added to 'standard.mac', the "use16" and "use32" forms of the "bits 16/32" directive. This is nothing new, just conforms to a lot of other assemblers. (minor)
- Changed label allocation from 320/32 (10000 labels @ 200K+) to 32/37 (1000 labels); makes running under DOS much easier. Since additional label space is allocated dynamically, this should have no effect on large programs with lots of labels. The 37 is a prime, believed to be better for hashing. (minor)

C.2.40 Version 0.98.03

"Integrated patchfile 0.98−0.98.01. I call this version 0.98.03 for historical reasons: 0.98.02 was trashed." ––John Coffman <johninsd@san.rr.com>, 27−Jul−2000

- Kendall Bennett's SciTech MGL changes
- Note that you must define "TASM_COMPAT" at compile−time to get the Tasm Ideal Mode compatibility.
- All changes can be compiled in and out using the TASM_COMPAT macros, and when compiled without TASM_COMPAT defined we get the exact same binary as the unmodified 0.98 sources.
- standard.mac, macros.c: Added macros to ignore TASM directives before first include
- nasm.h: Added extern declaration for tasm_compatible_mode
- nasm.c: Added global variable tasm_compatible_mode
- Added command line switch for TASM compatible mode (−t)
- Changed version command line to reflect when compiled with TASM additions
- Added response file processing to allow all arguments on a single line (response file is @resp rather than –@resp for NASM format).
- labels.c: Changes islocal() macro to support TASM style @@local labels.
- Added islocalchar() macro to support TASM style @@local labels.
- parser.c: Added support for TASM style memory references (ie: mov [DWORD eax],10 rather than the NASM style mov DWORD [eax],10).
- preproc.c: Added new directives, $\arg \xi$ local, η stacksize to directives table
- Added support for TASM style directives without a leading % symbol.
- Integrated a block of changes from Andrew Zabolotny

bit@eltech.ru>:
- A new keyword %xdefine and its case−insensitive counterpart %ixdefine. They work almost the same way as %define and %idefine but expand the definition immediately, not on the invocation. Something like a cross between %define and %assign. The "x" suffix stands for "eXpand", so "xdefine" can be deciphered as "expand−and−define". Thus you can do things like this:

```
 %assign ofs 0 
 %macro arg 1 
         %xdefine %1 dword [esp+ofs]
```

```
 %assign ofs ofs+4 
 %endmacro
```
• Changed the place where the expansion of %\$name macros are expanded. Now they are converted into ..@ctxnum.name form when detokenizing, so there are no quirks as before when using %\$name arguments to macros, in macros etc. For example:

```
 %macro abc 1 
         %define %1 hello 
 %endm 
 abc %$here 
 %$here
```
Now last line will be expanded into "hello" as expected. This also allows for lots of goodies, a good example are extended "proc" macros included in this archive.

• Added a check for "cstk" in smacro_defined() before calling get_ctx() – this allows for things like:

```
 %ifdef %$abc 
 %endif
```
to work without warnings even in no context.

- Added a check for "cstk" in %if*ctx and %elif*ctx directives this allows to use $\text{\$ifctx without}$ excessive warnings. If there is no active context, %ifctx goes through "false" branch.
- Removed "user error: " prefix with ϵ error directive: it just clobbers the output and has absolutely no functionality. Besides, this allows to write macros that does not differ from built−in functions in any way.
- Added expansion of string that is output by ϵ exported integer and ϵ and ϵ and ϵ is a ϵ .

```
 %define hello(x) Hello, x! 
 %define %$name andy
```
%error "hello(%\$name)"

Same happened with %include directive.

• Now all directives that expect an identifier will try to expand and concatenate everything without whitespaces in between before usage. For example, with "unfixed" nasm the commands

```
 %define %$abc hello 
%define %$abc goodbye
\$$abc
```
would produce "incorrect" output: last line will expand to

hello goodbyehello

Not quite what you expected, eh? :–) The answer is that preprocessor treats the %define construct as if it would be

%define __ %\$abc goodbye

(note the white space between __ and %\$abc). After my "fix" it will "correctly" expand into

goodbye

as expected. Note that I use quotes around words "correct", "incorrect" etc because this is rather a feature not a bug; however current behaviour is more logical (and allows more advanced macro usage :−).

Same change was applied to: %push,%macro,%imacro,%define,%idefine,%xdefine,%ixdefine, %assign,%iassign,%undef

- A new directive [WARNING {+|−}warning–id] have been added. It works only if the assembly phase is enabled (i.e. it doesn't work with nasm –e).
- A new warning type: macro−selfref. By default this warning is disabled; when enabled NASM warns when a macro self−references itself; for example the following source:

```
 [WARNING macro−selfref] 
 %macro push 1−* 
         %rep %0 
                push %1 
                 %rotate 1 
         %endrep 
 %endmacro
```

```
 push eax,ebx,ecx
```
will produce a warning, but if we remove the first line we won't see it anymore (which is The Right Thing To Do {tm} IMHO since C preprocessor eats such constructs without warnings at all).

- Added a "error" routine to preprocessor which always will set ERR_PASS1 bit in severity_code. This removes annoying repeated errors on first and second passes from preprocessor.
- Added the %+ operator in single−line macros for concatenating two identifiers. Usage example:

```
 %define _myfunc _otherfunc 
\deltadefine cextern(x) \delta + x
 cextern (myfunc)
```
After first expansion, third line will become "_myfunc". After this expansion is performed again so it becomes "_otherunc".

• Now if preprocessor is in a non−emitting state, no warning or error will be emitted. Example:

```
 %if 1 
         mov eax,ebx 
 %else 
         put anything you want between these two brackets, 
         even macro−parameter references %1 or local 
         labels %$zz or macro−local labels %%zz − no 
         warning will be emitted. 
 %endif
```
• Context−local variables on expansion as a last resort are looked up in outer contexts. For example, the following piece:

 %push outer %define %\$a [esp]

```
 %push inner 
           %$a 
           %pop 
 %pop
```
will expand correctly the fourth line to [esp]; if we'll define another %\$a inside the "inner" context, it will take precedence over outer definition. However, this modification has been applied only to expand_smacro and not to smacro_define: as a consequence expansion looks in outer contexts, but %ifdef won't look in outer contexts.

This behaviour is needed because we don't want nested contexts to act on already defined local macros. Example:

```
 %define %$arg1 [esp+4] 
 test eax,eax 
 if nz 
        mov eax,%$arg1 
 endif
```
In this example the "if" mmacro enters into the "if" context, so %\$arg1 is not valid anymore inside "if". Of course it could be worked around by using explicitely %\$\$arg1 but this is ugly IMHO.

- Fixed memory leak in %undef. The origline wasn't freed before exiting on success.
- Fixed trap in preprocessor when line expanded to empty set of tokens. This happens, for example, in the following case:

 #define SOMETHING SOMETHING

C.2.41 Version 0.98

All changes since NASM 0.98p3 have been produced by H. Peter Anvin <hpa@zytor.com>.

- The documentation comment delimiter is
- Allow EQU definitions to refer to external labels; reported by Pedro Gimeno.
- Re−enable support for RDOFF v1; reported by Pedro Gimeno.
- Updated License file per OK from Simon and Julian.

C.2.42 Version 0.98p9

- Update documentation (although the instruction set reference will have to wait; I don't want to hold up the 0.98 release for it.)
- Verified that the NASM implementation of the PEXTRW and PMOVMSKB instructions is correct. The encoding differs from what the Intel manuals document, but the Pentium III behaviour matches NASM, not the Intel manuals.
- Fix handling of implicit sizes in PSHUFW and PINSRW, reported by Stefan Hoffmeister.
- Resurrect the –s option, which was removed when changing the diagnostic output to stdout.

C.2.43 Version 0.98p8

• Fix for "DB" when NASM is running on a bigendian machine.

- Invoke insns. pl once for each output script, making Makefile. in legal for "make $-i$ ".
- Improve the Unix configure−based makefiles to make package creation easier.
- Included an RPM .spec file for building RPM (RedHat Package Manager) packages on Linux or Unix systems.
- Fix Makefile dependency problems.
- Change src/rdsrc.pl to include sectioning information in info output; required for install−info to work.
- Updated the RDOFF distribution to version 2 from Jules; minor massaging to make it compile in my environment.
- Split doc files that can be built by anyone with a Perl interpreter off into a separate archive.
- "Dress rehearsal" release!

C.2.44 Version 0.98p7

- Fixed opcodes with a third byte−sized immediate argument to not complain if given "byte" on the immediate.
- Allow %undef to remove single−line macros with arguments. This matches the behaviour of #undef in the C preprocessor.
- Allow $-d$, $-u$, $-i$ and $-p$ to be specified as $-D$, $-U$, $-i$ and $-P$ for compatibility with most C compilers and preprocessors. This allows Makefile options to be shared between cc and nasm, for example.
- Minor cleanups.
- Went through the list of Katmai instructions and hopefully fixed the (rather few) mistakes in it.
- (Hopefully) fixed a number of disassembler bugs related to ambiguous instructions (disambiguated by $-p$) and SSE instructions with REP.
- Fix for bug reported by Mark Junger: "call dword 0x12345678" should work and may add an OSP (affected CALL, JMP, Jcc).
- Fix for environments when "stderr" isn't a compile−time constant.

C.2.45 Version 0.98p6

- Took officially over coordination of the 0.98 release; so drop the p3.x notation. Skipped p4 and p5 to avoid confusion with John Fine's J4 and J5 releases.
- Update the documentation; however, it still doesn't include documentation for the various new instructions. I somehow wonder if it makes sense to have an instruction set reference in the assembler manual when Intel et al have PDF versions of their manuals online.
- Recognize "idt" or "centaur" for the –p option to ndisasm.
- Changed error messages back to stderr where they belong, but add an -E option to redirect them elsewhere (the DOS shell cannot redirect stderr.)
- –M option to generate Makefile dependencies (based on code from Alex Verstak.)
- %undef preprocessor directive, and –u option, that undefines a single−line macro.
- OS/2 Makefile (Mkfiles/Makefile.os2) for Borland under OS/2; from Chuck Crayne.
- Various minor bugfixes (reported by): Dangling %s in preproc.c (Martin Junker)
- THERE ARE KNOWN BUGS IN SSE AND THE OTHER KATMAI INSTRUCTIONS. I am on a trip and didn't bring the Katmai instruction reference, so I can't work on them right now.
- Updated the License file per agreement with Simon and Jules to include a GPL distribution clause.

C.2.46 Version 0.98p3.7

- (Hopefully) fixed the canned Makefiles to include the outrdf2 and zoutieee modules.
- Renamed changes.asm to changed.asm.

C.2.47 Version 0.98p3.6

• Fixed a bunch of instructions that were added in 0.98p3.5 which had memory operands, and the address−size prefix was missing from the instruction pattern.

C.2.48 Version 0.98p3.5

- Merged in changes from John S. Fine's 0.98−J5 release. John's based 0.98−J5 on my 0.98p3.3 release; this merges the changes.
- Expanded the instructions flag field to a long so we can fit more flags; mark SSE (KNI) and AMD or Katmai−specific instructions as such.
- Fix the "PRIV" flag on a bunch of instructions, and create new "PROT" flag for protected−mode−only instructions (orthogonal to if the instruction is privileged!) and new "SMM" flag for SMM−only instructions.
- Added AMD−only SYSCALL and SYSRET instructions.
- Make SSE actually work, and add new Katmai MMX instructions.
- Added a –p (preferred vendor) option to ndisasm so that it can distinguish e.g. Cyrix opcodes also used in SSE. For example:

```
 ndisasm −p cyrix aliased.bin 
 00000000 670F514310 paddsiw mm0,[ebx+0x10] 
 00000005 670F514320 paddsiw mm0,[ebx+0x20] 
 ndisasm −p intel aliased.bin 
 00000000 670F514310 sqrtps xmm0,[ebx+0x10] 
 00000005 670F514320 sqrtps xmm0,[ebx+0x20]
```
• Added a bunch of Cyrix−specific instructions.

C.2.49 Version 0.98p3.4

- Made at least an attempt to modify all the additional Makefiles (in the Mkfiles directory). I can't test it, but this was the best I could do.
- DOS DJGPP+"Opus Make" Makefile from John S. Fine.
- changes.asm changes from John S. Fine.

C.2.50 Version 0.98p3.3

• Patch from Conan Brink to allow nesting of $*$ rep directives.

- If we're going to allow INT01 as an alias for INT1/ICEBP (one of Jules 0.98p3 changes), then we should allow INT03 as an alias for INT3 as well.
- Updated changes.asm to include the latest changes.
- Tried to clean up the <CR>s that had snuck in from a DOS/Windows environment into my Unix environment, and try to make sure than DOS/Windows users get them back.
- We would silently generate broken tools if insns.dat wasn't sorted properly. Change insns.pl so that the order doesn't matter.
- Fix bug in insns.pl (introduced by me) which would cause conditional instructions to have an extra "cc" in disassembly, e.g. "jnz" disassembled as "jccnz".

C.2.51 Version 0.98p3.2

- Merged in John S. Fine's changes from his 0.98−J4 prerelease; see http://www.csoft.net/cz/johnfine/
- Changed previous "spotless" Makefile target (appropriate for distribution) to "distclean", and added "cleaner" target which is same as "clean" except deletes files generated by Perl scripts; "spotless" is union.
- Removed BASIC programs from distribution. Get a Perl interpreter instead (see below.)
- Calling this "pre−release 3.2" rather than "p3−hpa2" because of John's contributions.
- Actually link in the IEEE output format (zoutieee.c); fix a bunch of compiler warnings in that file. Note I don't know what IEEE output is supposed to look like, so these changes were made "blind".

C.2.52 Version 0.98p3−hpa

- Merged nasm098p3.zip with nasm−0.97.tar.gz to create a fully buildable version for Unix systems (Makefile.in updates, etc.)
- Changed insns.pl to create the instruction tables in nasm.h and names.c, so that a new instruction can be added by adding it *only* to insns.dat.
- Added the following new instructions: SYSENTER, SYSEXIT, FXSAVE, FXRSTOR, UD1, UD2 (the latter two are two opcodes that Intel guarantee will never be used; one of them is documented as UD2 in Intel documentation, the other one just as "Undefined Opcode" –– calling it UD1 seemed to make sense.)
- MAX_SYMBOL was defined to be 9, but LOADALL286 and LOADALL386 are 10 characters long. Now MAX_SYMBOL is derived from insns.dat.
- A note on the BASIC programs included: forget them. insns.bas is already out of date. Get yourself a Perl interpreter for your platform of choice at [http://www.cpan.org/ports/index.html.](http://www.cpan.org/ports/index.html)

C.2.53 Version 0.98 pre−release 3

- added response file support, improved command line handling, new layout help screen
- fixed limit checking bug, 'OUT byte nn, reg' bug, and a couple of rdoff related bugs, updated Wishlist; 0.98 Prerelease 3.

C.2.54 Version 0.98 pre−release 2

• fixed bug in outcoff.c to do with truncating section names longer than 8 characters, referencing beyond end of string; 0.98 pre−release 2

C.2.55 Version 0.98 pre−release 1

- Fixed a bug whereby STRUC didn't work at all in RDF.
- Fixed a problem with group specification in PUBDEFs in OBJ.
- Improved ease of adding new output formats. Contribution due to Fox Cutter.
- Fixed a bug in relocations in the 'bin' format: was showing up when a relocatable reference crossed an 8192−byte boundary in any output section.
- Fixed a bug in local labels: local−label lookups were inconsistent between passes one and two if an EQU occurred between the definition of a global label and the subsequent use of a local label local to that global.
- Fixed a seg−fault in the preprocessor (again) which happened when you use a blank line as the first line of a multi−line macro definition and then defined a label on the same line as a call to that macro.
- Fixed a stale−pointer bug in the handling of the NASM environment variable. Thanks to Thomas McWilliams.
- ELF had a hard limit on the number of sections which caused segfaults when transgressed. Fixed.
- Added ability for ndisasm to read from stdin by using '−' as the filename.
- ndisasm wasn't outputting the TO keyword. Fixed.
- Fixed error cascade on bogus expression in %if an error in evaluation was causing the entire %if to be discarded, thus creating trouble later when the %else or %endif was encountered.
- Forward reference tracking was instruction−granular not operand− granular, which was causing 286−specific code to be generated needlessly on code of the form 'shr word [forwardref],1'. Thanks to Jim Hague for sending a patch.
- All messages now appear on stdout, as sending them to stderr serves no useful purpose other than to make redirection difficult.
- Fixed the problem with EQUs pointing to an external symbol this now generates an error message.
- Allowed multiple size prefixes to an operand, of which only the first is taken into account.
- Incorporated John Fine's changes, including fixes of a large number of preprocessor bugs, some small problems in OBJ, and a reworking of label handling to define labels before their line is assembled, rather than after.
- Reformatted a lot of the source code to be more readable. Included 'coding.txt' as a guideline for how to format code for contributors.
- Stopped nested %reps causing a panic they now cause a slightly more friendly error message instead.
- Fixed floating point constant problems (patch by Pedro Gimeno)
- Fixed the return value of insn_size() not being checked for –1, indicating an error.
- Incorporated 3Dnow! instructions.
- Fixed the 'mov eax, $eax + ebx'$ bug.
- Fixed the GLOBAL EQU bug in ELF. Released developers release 3.
- Incorporated John Fine's command line parsing changes
- Incorporated David Lindauer's OMF debug support
- Made changes for LCC 4.0 support (__NASM_CDecl__, removed register size specification warning when sizes agree).

C.3 NASM 0.9 Series

Revisions before 0.98.

C.3.1 Version 0.97 released December 1997

- This was entirely a bug−fix release to 0.96, which seems to have got cursed. Silly me.
- Fixed stupid mistake in OBJ which caused 'MOV EAX,<constant>' to fail. Caused by an error in the 'MOV EAX,<segment>' support.
- ndisasm hung at EOF when compiled with lcc on Linux because lcc on Linux somehow breaks feof(). ndisasm now does not rely on feof().
- A heading in the documentation was missing due to a markup error in the indexing. Fixed.
- Fixed failure to update all pointers on realloc() within extended− operand code in parser.c. Was causing wrong behaviour and seg faults on lines such as 'dd 0.0,0.0,0.0,0.0,...'
- Fixed a subtle preprocessor bug whereby invoking one multi−line macro on the first line of the expansion of another, when the second had been invoked with a label defined before it, didn't expand the inner macro.
- Added internal.doc back in to the distribution archives it was missing in 0.96 *blush*
- Fixed bug causing 0.96 to be unable to assemble its own test files, specifically objtest.asm. *blush again*
- Fixed seg−faults and bogus error messages caused by mismatching %rep and %endrep within multi−line macro definitions.
- Fixed a problem with buffer overrun in OBJ, which was causing corruption at ends of long PUBDEF records.
- Separated DOS archives into main−program and documentation to reduce download size.

C.3.2 Version 0.96 released November 1997

- Fixed a bug whereby, if 'nasm sourcefile' would cause a filename collision warning and put output into 'nasm.out', then 'nasm sourcefile –o outputfile' still gave the warning even though the '−o' was honoured. Fixed name pollution under Digital UNIX: one of its header files defined R_SP, which broke the enum in nasm.h.
- Fixed minor instruction table problems: FUCOM and FUCOMP didn't have two−operand forms; NDISASM didn't recognise the longer register forms of PUSH and POP (eg FF F3 for PUSH BX); TEST mem, imm32 was flagged as undocumented; the 32–bit forms of CMOV had 16–bit operand size prefixes; 'AAD imm' and 'AAM imm' are no longer flagged as undocumented because the Intel Architecture reference documents them.
- Fixed a problem with the local−label mechanism, whereby strange types of symbol (EQUs, auto−defined OBJ segment base symbols) interfered with the 'previous global label' value and screwed up local labels.
- Fixed a bug whereby the stub preprocessor didn't communicate with the listing file generator, so that the –a and –l options in conjunction would produce a useless listing file.
- Merged 'os2' object file format back into 'obj', after discovering that 'obj' _also_ shouldn't have a link pass separator in a module containing a non−trivial MODEND. Flat segments are now declared using the FLAT attribute. 'os2' is no longer a valid object format name: use 'obj'.
- Removed the fixed−size temporary storage in the evaluator. Very very long expressions (like 'mov $ax, 1+1+1+...$ for two hundred 1s or so) should now no longer crash NASM.
- Fixed a bug involving segfaults on disassembly of MMX instructions, by changing the meaning of one of the operand−type flags in nasm.h. This may cause other apparently unrelated MMX problems; it needs to be tested thoroughly.
- Fixed some buffer overrun problems with large OBJ output files. Thanks to DJ Delorie for the bug report and fix.
- Made preprocess–only mode actually listen to the %line markers as it prints them, so that it can report errors more sanely.
- Re−designed the evaluator to keep more sensible track of expressions involving forward references: can now cope with previously−nightmare situations such as:

```
 mov ax,foo | bar 
 foo equ 1 
 bar equ 2
```
- Added the ALIGN and ALIGNB standard macros.
- Added PIC support in ELF: use of WRT to obtain the four extra relocation types needed.
- Added the ability for output file formats to define their own extensions to the GLOBAL, COMMON and EXTERN directives.
- Implemented common−variable alignment, and global−symbol type and size declarations, in ELF.
- Implemented NEAR and FAR keywords for common variables, plus far−common element size specification, in OBJ.
- Added a feature whereby EXTERNs and COMMONs in OBJ can be given a default WRT specification (either a segment or a group).
- Transformed the Unix NASM archive into an auto−configuring package.
- Added a sanity−check for people applying SEG to things which are already segment bases: this previously went unnoticed by the SEG processing and caused OBJ−driver panics later.
- Added the ability, in OBJ format, to deal with 'MOV EAX, <segment>' type references: OBJ doesn't directly support dword−size segment base fixups, but as long as the low two bytes of the constant term are zero, a word−size fixup can be generated instead and it will work.
- Added the ability to specify sections' alignment requirements in Win32 object files and pure binary files.
- Added preprocess–time expression evaluation: the %assign (and %iassign) directive and the bare %if (and %elif) conditional. Added relational operators to the evaluator, for use only in %if constructs: the standard relationals = $\langle \rangle \langle \rangle \langle \rangle = \rangle$ (and C−like synonyms = and !=) plus low-precedence logical operators &&, \wedge and ||.
- Added a preprocessor repeat construct: %rep / %exitrep / %endrep.
- Added the __FILE__ and __LINE__ standard macros.
- Added a sanity check for number constants being greater than 0xFFFFFFFF. The warning can be disabled.
- Added the %0 token whereby a variadic multi−line macro can tell how many parameters it's been given in a specific invocation.
- Added %rotate, allowing multi–line macro parameters to be cycled.
- Added the '*' option for the maximum parameter count on multi−line macros, allowing them to take arbitrarily many parameters.
- Added the ability for the user−level forms of EXTERN, GLOBAL and COMMON to take more than one argument.
- Added the IMPORT and EXPORT directives in OBJ format, to deal with Windows DLLs.
- Added some more preprocessor $\text{\$if}$ constructs: $\text{\$if}$ idn / $\text{\$if}$ idni (exact textual identity), and $\text{\$if}$ id / %ifnum / %ifstr (token type testing).
- Added the ability to distinguish SHL AX,1 (the 8086 version) from SHL AX,BYTE 1 (the 286−and−upwards version whose constant happens to be 1).
- Added NetBSD/FreeBSD/OpenBSD's variant of a.out format, complete with PIC shared library features.
- Changed NASM's idiosyncratic handling of FCLEX, FDISI, FENI, FINIT, FSAVE, FSTCW, FSTENV, and FSTSW to bring it into line with the otherwise accepted standard. The previous behaviour, though it was a deliberate feature, was a deliberate feature based on a misunderstanding. Apologies for the inconvenience.
- Improved the flexibility of ABSOLUTE: you can now give it an expression rather than being restricted to a constant, and it can take relocatable arguments as well.
- Added the ability for a variable to be declared as EXTERN multiple times, and the subsequent definitions are just ignored.
- We now allow instruction prefixes (CS, DS, LOCK, REPZ etc) to be alone on a line (without a following instruction).
- Improved sanity checks on whether the arguments to EXTERN, GLOBAL and COMMON are valid identifiers.
- Added misc/exebin.mac to allow direct generation of .EXE files by hacking up an EXE header using DB and DW; also added test/binexe.asm to demonstrate the use of this. Thanks to Yann Guidon for contributing the EXE header code.
- ndisasm forgot to check whether the input file had been successfully opened. Now it does. Doh!
- Added the Cyrix extensions to the MMX instruction set.
- Added a hinting mechanism to allow [EAX+EBX] and [EBX+EAX] to be assembled differently. This is important since [ESI+EBP] and [EBP+ESI] have different default base segment registers.
- Added support for the PharLap OMF extension for 4096−byte segment alignment.

C.3.3 Version 0.95 released July 1997

• Fixed yet another ELF bug. This one manifested if the user relied on the default segment, and attempted to define global symbols without first explicitly declaring the target segment.

- Added makefiles (for NASM and the RDF tools) to build Win32 console apps under Symantec C++. Donated by Mark Junker.
- Added 'macros.bas' and 'insns.bas', QBasic versions of the Perl scripts that convert 'standard.mac' to 'macros.c' and convert 'insns.dat' to 'insnsa.c' and 'insnsd.c'. Also thanks to Mark Junker.
- Changed the diassembled forms of the conditional instructions so that JB is now emitted as JC, and other similar changes. Suggested list by Ulrich Doewich.
- Added '@' to the list of valid characters to begin an identifier with.
- Documentary changes, notably the addition of the 'Common Problems' section in nasm.doc.
- Fixed a bug relating to 32−bit PC−relative fixups in OBJ.
- Fixed a bug in perm_copy() in labels.c which was causing exceptions in cleanup_labels() on some systems.
- Positivity sanity check in TIMES argument changed from a warning to an error following a further complaint.
- Changed the acceptable limits on byte and word operands to allow things like '~10111001b' to work.
- Fixed a major problem in the preprocessor which caused seg−faults if macro definitions contained blank lines or comment−only lines.
- Fixed inadequate error checking on the commas separating the arguments to 'db', 'dw' etc.
- Fixed a crippling bug in the handling of macros with operand counts defined with a '+' modifier.
- Fixed a bug whereby object file formats which stored the input file name in the output file (such as OBJ and COFF) weren't doing so correctly when the output file name was specified on the command line.
- Removed [INC] and [INCLUDE] support for good, since they were obsolete anyway.
- Fixed a bug in OBJ which caused all fixups to be output in 16−bit (old−format) FIXUPP records, rather than putting the 32−bit ones in FIXUPP32 (new−format) records.
- Added, tentatively, OS/2 object file support (as a minor variant on OBJ).
- Updates to Fox Cutter's Borland C makefile, Makefile.bc2.
- Removed a spurious second fclose() on the output file.
- Added the '−s' command line option to redirect all messages which would go to stderr (errors, help text) to stdout instead.
- Added the '−w' command line option to selectively suppress some classes of assembly warning messages.
- Added the '−p' pre−include and '−d' pre−define command−line options.
- Added an include file search path: the '−i' command line option.
- Fixed a silly little preprocessor bug whereby starting a line with a '%!' environment−variable reference caused an 'unknown directive' error.
- Added the long−awaited listing file support: the '−l' command line option.
- Fixed a problem with OBJ format whereby, in the absence of any explicit segment definition, non−global symbols declared in the implicit default segment generated spurious EXTDEF records in the output.
- Added the NASM environment variable.
- From this version forward, Win32 console−mode binaries will be included in the DOS distribution in addition to the 16−bit binaries. Added Makefile.vc for this purpose.
- Added 'return 0;' to test/objlink.c to prevent compiler warnings.
- Added the __NASM_MAJOR__ and __NASM_MINOR__ standard defines.
- Added an alternative memory−reference syntax in which prefixing an operand with '&' is equivalent to enclosing it in square brackets, at the request of Fox Cutter.
- Errors in pass two now cause the program to return a non−zero error code, which they didn't before.
- Fixed the single−line macro cycle detection, which didn't work at all on macros with no parameters (caused an infinite loop). Also changed the behaviour of single−line macro cycle detection to work like cpp, so that macros like 'extrn' as given in the documentation can be implemented.
- Fixed the implementation of WRT, which was too restrictive in that you couldn't do 'mov ax,[di+abc wrt dgroup]' because (di+abc) wasn't a relocatable reference.

C.3.4 Version 0.94 released April 1997

- Major item: added the macro processor.
- Added undocumented instructions SMI, IBTS, XBTS and LOADALL286. Also reorganised CMPXCHG instruction into early−486 and Pentium forms. Thanks to Thobias Jones for the information.
- Fixed two more stupid bugs in ELF, which were causing 'ld' to continue to seg−fault in a lot of non−trivial cases.
- Fixed a seg−fault in the label manager.
- Stopped FBLD and FBSTP from _requiring_ the TWORD keyword, which is the only option for BCD loads/stores in any case.
- Ensured FLDCW, FSTCW and FSTSW can cope with the WORD keyword, if anyone bothers to provide it. Previously they complained unless no keyword at all was present.
- Some forms of FDIV/FDIVR and FSUB/FSUBR were still inverted: a vestige of a bug that I thought had been fixed in 0.92. This was fixed, hopefully for good this time...
- Another minor phase error (insofar as a phase error can _ever_ be minor) fixed, this one occurring in code of the form

```
 rol ax,forward_reference 
 forward_reference equ 1
```
- The number supplied to TIMES is now sanity−checked for positivity, and also may be greater than 64K (which previously didn't work on 16−bit systems).
- Added Watcom C makefiles, and misc/pmw.bat, donated by Dominik Behr.
- Added the INCBIN pseudo−opcode.
- Due to the advent of the preprocessor, the [INCLUDE] and [INC] directives have become obsolete. They are still supported in this version, with a warning, but won't be in the next.
- Fixed a bug in OBJ format, which caused incorrect object records to be output when absolute labels were made global.
- Updates to RDOFF subdirectory, and changes to outrdf.c.

C.3.5 Version 0.93 released January 1997

This release went out in a great hurry after semi−crippling bugs were found in 0.92.

- Really *did* fix the stack overflows this time. *blush*
- Had problems with EA instruction sizes changing between passes, when an offset contained a forward reference and so 4 bytes were allocated for the offset in pass one; by pass two the symbol had been defined and happened to be a small absolute value, so only 1 byte got allocated, causing instruction size mismatch between passes and hence incorrect address calculations. Fixed.
- Stupid bug in the revised ELF section generation fixed (associated string−table section for .symtab was hard−coded as 7, even when this didn't fit with the real section table). Was causing 'ld' to seg−fault under Linux.
- Included a new Borland C makefile, Makefile.bc2, donated by Fox Cutter <lmb@comtch.iea.com>.

C.3.6 Version 0.92 released January 1997

- The FDIVP/FDIVRP and FSUBP/FSUBRP pairs had been inverted: this was fixed. This also affected the LCC driver.
- Fixed a bug regarding 32−bit effective addresses of the form [other_register+ESP].
- Documentary changes, notably documentation of the fact that Borland Win32 compilers use 'obj' rather than 'win32' object format.
- Fixed the COMENT record in OBJ files, which was formatted incorrectly.
- Fixed a bug causing segfaults in large RDF files.
- OBJ format now strips initial periods from segment and group definitions, in order to avoid complications with the local label syntax.
- Fixed a bug in disassembling far calls and jumps in NDISASM.
- Added support for user−defined sections in COFF and ELF files.
- Compiled the DOS binaries with a sensible amount of stack, to prevent stack overflows on any arithmetic expression containing parentheses.
- Fixed a bug in handling of files that do not terminate in a newline.

C.3.7 Version 0.91 released November 1996

- Loads of bug fixes.
- Support for RDF added.
- Support for DBG debugging format added.
- Support for 32−bit extensions to Microsoft OBJ format added.
- Revised for Borland C: some variable names changed, makefile added.
- LCC support revised to actually work.
- JMP/CALL NEAR/FAR notation added.
- 'a16', 'o16', 'a32' and 'o32' prefixes added.
- Range checking on short jumps implemented.
- MMX instruction support added.
- Negative floating point constant support added.
- Memory handling improved to bypass 64K barrier under DOS.
- \$ prefix to force treatment of reserved words as identifiers added.
- Default−size mechanism for object formats added.
- Compile−time configurability added.
- #, ω , \sim and c{?} are now valid characters in labels.
- −e and −k options in NDISASM added.

C.3.8 Version 0.90 released October 1996

First release version. First support for object file output. Other changes from previous version (0.3x) too numerous to document.

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