

Guidance Programming Language User Manual

Part Number 609644, Revision A

Brooks Automation

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<p>Brooks Automation 15 Elizabeth Drive Chelmsford, MA 01824-2400 Tel: +1 978-262-2400 Fax: +1 978-262-2500</p>	<p>Brooks Automation, PreciseFlex Collaborative Robots 201 Lindbergh Avenue Livermore, CA 94551 Tel: +1-408-224-2838</p>
---	---



Worldwide Headquarters

15 Elizabeth Drive
Chelmsford, MA 01824 U.S.A.

Brooks Automation, PreciseFlex Collaborative Robots

201 Lindbergh Avenue
Livermore, CA 94551 U.S.A

Technical Support

Location	Contact	Website
North America	+1-800-447-5007 (Toll-Free) +1-978-262-2900 (Local) +1-408-224-2838 (PreciseFlex™)	http://www.brooks.com/
Europe	support_preciseflex@brooksautomation.com	
Japan	+81 120-255-390 (Toll Free) +81 45-330-9005 (Local)	
China	+86 21-5131-7066	
Taiwan	+886 080-003-5556 (Toll Free) +886 3-5525258 (Local)	
Korea	1800-5116 (Toll Free)	
Singapore	+65 1-800-4-276657 (Toll Free) +65 6309 0701 (Local)	

General Emails

Division	Email Address
Sales	sales_preciseflex@brooksautomation.com
Technical Support	support_preciseflex@brooksautomation.com
Technical Publications	Technical.Publications@brooksautomation.com

Revision History

Revision	ECO	Date	Actions	Author
Rev A	EC147330	August 4, 2023	Released manual at Rev. A to follow standard Brooks technical publication styles.	M. Ashenfelder

Table of Contents

1. Safety	1
Safety Setup	1
Authorized Personnel Only	1
Explanation of Hazards and Alerts	2
Safety Text	2
Safety Icons	2
Signal Words and Color	2
Alert Example	3
General Safety Considerations	4
Mechanical Hazards	6
Electrical Hazards	7
Ergonomic Hazards	8
Emergency Stop Circuit (E-Stop)	10
Recycling and Hazardous Materials	10
2. GPL Overview	11
3. Statement Structure	13
4. Data Type and Variables	14
Basic Data Types	14
Variable Declarations	16
Data Type Arrays	19
Scope of Names	21
5. Objects and Classes	22
Objects and Classes Overview	22
Objects, Fields, Properties and Methods	22
Classes of Objects	23
The Dot “.” Operator	23
Object Variables and the New Clause	24
Copying Object Variables and Values	25
Clone Method	26
Nothing	26
Objects as Procedure Arguments	26
ByVal	26
ByRef	27
User-Defined Classes	27
Class Variables	28
Class Procedures	28
Me Object	30
Constructors	30
Limitations	31
6. Arithmetic Operations	32
Arithmetic Expressions	32
Arithmetic Functions and Methods	34

7. Strings and String Expressions	36
Strings and String Expressions Overview	36
8. Assignment Statements	39
Assignment Statements Overview	39
9. Control Structures	41
Control Structures Overview	41
GoTo Statements	41
If...Then...Else...End If Statements	41
For...Next Statements	42
While...End While Statements	43
Do...Loop Statements	43
Select...Case...End Select Statements	43
Nested Control Structures	44
10. Procedures, Delegates and Modules	45
Subroutines and Functions	45
Calling a Procedure	45
Returning from a Procedure	46
Procedure Arguments	46
Not Supported	47
Delegates	47
Delegate Statement	48
Creating Delegate Objects	48
AddressOf Operator	49
AddressOf vs. String	49
Modules	50
Scope of Items within Modules	50
Special Initialization Procedures	50
11. Exception Handling	51
Exception Handling Overview	51
Try...Catch...Finally...End Try Statements	51
Throw Statement	53
Exception Class and Objects	53
12. Motion- and Controller-Related Classes	55
Motion- and Controller-Related Classes Overview	55
Signal Class	56
Location Class and Objects	57
Profile Class and Objects	61
Move Class	62
RefFrame Class and Objects	63
Controller Class	67
Robot Class	69
Latch Class	70
13. Networking Communications	72
Networking Communications Overview	72
Networking Definitions and Classes	72



TCP Server	75
TCP Server Example	76
TCP Client	77
TCP Client Example	77
UDP Server and Client	78
UDP Client Example - Read File using TFTP	78
UDP Client Example - Write File using TFTP	80
14. MODBUS/TCP Communications	83
MODBUS/TCP Communications Overview	83
Modbus Class	84
Modbus Master Connection	85
Modbus Master Examples	85
15. File I/O, Serial I/O, and Streams	87
File I/O, Serial I/O and Streams Overview	87
Classes and Methods	88
File I/O	90
Steps for Writing a File	92
Steps for Reading a File	92
File I/O Example	92
Serial I/O	93
Steps for Communicating Using a Serial Port	94
Serial I/O Example	94
Console Output	95
Example	95
Non-Volatile Memory (NVRAM)	96
/NVRAM Files	96
Automatically Logging Error Messages to the NVRAM	98
Non-Volatile Integer Data	99
Flash Sub-Partitions	99
Flash Corruption	99
Sub-Partitions	100
Creating Sub-Partitions	100
16. Vision Guidance	102
Vision Guidance Overview	102
Classes and Methods	103
Vision Interface	105
Vision Procedure Example	106
17. Managing and Executing GPL Projects	108
Projects and Files	108
Modules	108
Executing a Project	109
18. Thread Control	110
Thread Control Overview	110
Thread Synchronization	110

Thread Scheduling	111
The Thread Class	112
Thread-Safe Data Access in GPL	113
Thread-Safe Data Types in GPL	113
Creating Thread-Safe Interlocks	114
19. XML Data Exchange	116
XML Data Exchange Overview	116
Document Object Model (DOM)	117
Character Representation	118
XmlDoc Class	118
XmlNode Class	119
Examples	121
Reading an XML file	121
Writing an XML file	121
Accessing data in an XML document tree	122
Searching for an element in the document	122
Creating an XML document from a GPL program	123
Error Handling	123
20. Misc. Unsupported Features	125

1. Safety

Safety Setup

Brooks uses caution, warning, and danger labels to convey critical information required for the safe and proper operation of the hardware and software. Read and comply with all labels to prevent personal injury and damage to the equipment.

 DANGER Read the Safety Chapter	
<p>Failure to review the <i>Safety</i> chapter and follow the safety warnings can result in serious injury or death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All personnel involved with the operation or maintenance of this product must read and understand the information in this safety chapter.• Follow all applicable safety codes of the facility as well as national and international safety codes.• Know the facility safety procedures, safety equipment, and contact information.• Read and understand each procedure before performing it.	

Authorized Personnel Only

This product is intended for use by trained and experienced personnel. Operators must comply with applicable organizational operating procedures, industry standards, and all local, regional, national, and international laws and regulations.

Explanation of Hazards and Alerts

This manual and this product use industry standard hazard alerts to notify the user of personal or equipment safety hazards. Hazard alerts contain safety text, icons, signal words, and colors.

Safety Text

Hazard alert text follows a standard, fixed-order, three-part format.





- Identify the hazard
- State the consequences if the hazard is not avoided
- State how to avoid the hazard.

Safety Icons

- Hazard alerts contain safety icons that graphically identify the hazard.
- The safety icons in this manual conform to ISO 3864 and ANSI Z535 standards.

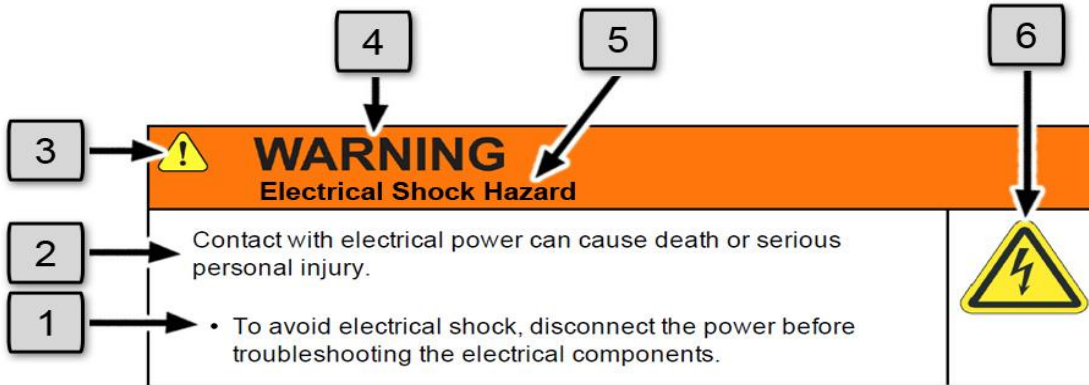
Signal Words and Color

Signal words inform of the level of hazard.

	<p>Danger indicates a hazardous situation which, if not avoided, will result in serious injury or death.</p> <p>The Danger signal word is white on a red background with an exclamation point inside a yellow triangle with black border.</p>
	<p>Warning indicates a hazardous situation which, if not avoided, could result in serious injury or death.</p> <p>The Warning signal word is black on an orange background with an exclamation point inside a yellow triangle with black border.</p>
	<p>Caution indicates a hazardous situation or unsafe practice which, if not avoided, may result in minor or moderate personal injury.</p> <p>The Caution signal word is black on a yellow background with an exclamation point inside a yellow triangle with black border.</p>
	<p>Notice indicates a situation or unsafe practice which, if not avoided, may result in equipment damage.</p> <p>The Notice signal word is white on blue background with no icon.</p>




Alert Example



The following is an example of a Warning hazard alert.







Number	Description
1.	How to Avoid the Hazard
2.	Source of Hazard and Severity
3.	General Alert Icon
4.	Signal Word
5.	Type of Hazard
6.	Hazard Symbol(s)



General Safety Considerations



 WARNING Software	
<p>Software is not safety rated. Unplanned motion can occur as long as power is supplied to the motors. Maximum torque could be momentarily applied that may cause equipment damage or personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only operate the robot with its covers installed. Guarantee that safety controller features are in place (for example, an emergency stop button and protective stop). Regularly test safety components to prove that they function correctly. 	 



 WARNING Robot Mounting	
<p>Before applying power, the robot must be mounted on a rigid test stand, secure surface, or system application. Improperly mounted robots can cause excessive vibration and uncontrolled movement that may cause equipment damage or personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always mount the robot on a secure test stand, surface, or system before applying power. 	



 WARNING Do Not Use Unauthorized Parts	
<p>Using parts with different inertial properties with the same robot application can cause the robot's performance to decrease and potentially cause unplanned robot motion that could result in serious personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not use unauthorized parts. Confirm that the correct robot application is being used. 	

 WARNING Magnetic Field Hazard	
<p>This product contains magnetic motors that can be hazardous to implanted medical devices, such as pacemakers, and cause personal harm, severe injury, or death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain a safe working distance of 30 cm from the motor when with an energized robot if you use a cardiac rhythm management device.	



 CAUTION Unauthorized Service	
<p>Personal injury or damage to equipment may result if this product is operated or serviced by untrained or unauthorized personnel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only qualified personnel who have received certified training and have the proper job qualifications are allowed to transport, assemble, operate, or maintain the product.	




 CAUTION Damaged Components	
<p>The use of this product when components or cables appear to be damaged may cause equipment malfunction or personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do not use this product if components or cables appear to be damaged.• Place the product in a location where it will not get damaged.• Route cables and tubing so that they do not become damaged and do not present a personal safety hazard.	



 CAUTION Inappropriate Use	
<p>Use of this product in a manner or for purposes other than for what it is intended may cause equipment damage or personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only use the product for its intended application.• Do not modify this product beyond its original design.• Always operate this product with the covers in place.	

 CAUTION Seismic Restraint	
<p>The use of this product in an earthquake-prone environment may cause equipment damage or personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The user is responsible for determining whether the product is used in an earthquake prone environment and installing the appropriate seismic restraints in accordance with local regulations. 	

Mechanical Hazards



 CAUTION Pinch Point	
<p>Moving parts of the product may cause squeezing or compression of fingers or hands resulting in personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not operate the product without the protective covers in place. 	



 WARNING Automatic Movement	
<p>Whenever power is applied to the product, there is the potential for automatic or unplanned movement of the product or its components, which could result in personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow safe practices for working with energized products per the facility requirements. Do not rely on the system software or process technology to prevent unexpected product motion. Do not operate the product without its protective covers in place. While the collaborative robotics system is designed to be safe around personnel, gravity and other factors may present hazards and should be considered. 	 



 CAUTION Vibration Hazard	
<p>As with any servo-based device, the robot can enter a vibratory state resulting in mechanical and audible hazards. Vibration indicates a serious problem. Immediately remove power.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before energizing, ensure the robot is bolted to a rigid metal chamber or stand.	

Electrical Hazards

Refer to the specifications of the *Guidance Controller Quick Start Guide* for the electrical power.



 DANGER Electrical Shock Hazard	
<p>Contact with electrical power can cause personal harm and serious injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To avoid electrical shock, disconnect the power before troubleshooting the electrical components.• Check the unit's specifications for the actual system power requirements and use appropriate precautions.• Never operate this product without its protection covers on.	



 WARNING Electrical Burn	
<p>Improper electrical connection or connection to an improper electrical supply can result in electrical burns resulting in equipment damage, serious injury, or death.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always provide the robot with the proper power supply connectors and ground that are compliant with appropriate electrical codes.	



 WARNING Electrical Fire Hazard	
<p>All energized electrical equipment poses the risk of fire, which may result in severe injury or death. Fires in wiring, fuse boxes, energized electrical equipment, computers, and other electrical sources require a Class C extinguisher.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a fire extinguisher designed for electrical fires (Class C in the US and Class E in Asia). • It is the facility's responsibility to determine if any other fire extinguishers are needed for the system that the robot is in. 	

NOTICE
<p>Improper handling of the power source or connecting devices may cause component damage or equipment fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect the system to an appropriate electrical supply. • Turn off the power before servicing the unit. • Turn off the power before disconnecting the cables.

Ergonomic Hazards



 CAUTION Heavy Lift Hazard	
<p>Failure to take the proper precautions before moving the robot could result in back injury and muscle strain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a lifting device and cart rated for the weight of the drive or arm. • Only persons certified in operating the lifting device should be moving the product. 	

 CAUTION Tipover Hazard	
<p>This product has a high center of gravity which may cause the product to tip over and cause serious injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always properly restrain the product when moving it. • Never operate the robot unless it is rigidly mounted. 	

 CAUTION Trip Hazard	
<p>Cables for power and communication and facilities create trip hazards which may cause serious injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Always route the cables where they are not in the way of traffic.	

Emergency Stop Circuit (E-Stop)

The integrator of the robot must provide an emergency stop switch.

 WARNING Emergency Stop Circuit	
<p>Using this product without an emergency stop circuit may cause personal injury.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer is responsible for integrating an emergency stop circuit into their system.• Do not override or bypass the emergency stop circuit.	

Recycling and Hazardous Materials

Brooks Automation complies with the EU Directive 2002/96/EU Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE).

The end user must responsibly dispose of the product and its components when disposal is required. The initial cost of the equipment does not include cost for disposal. For further information and assistance in disposal, please email Brooks Automation Technical Support at support@preciseflex@brooksautomation.com.

2. GPL Overview

This document introduces you to the Guidance Programming Language, GPL. GPL is a full-featured language designed to allow you to program and automatically operate motion controllers with machine vision and the mechanical mechanisms (“robots”) that are controlled by these devices.

GPL can be employed in a wide variety of applications including: general robotics; mechanical assembly; material handling and packaging; palletizing; carton loading or case packing; wafer handling or machine control in the semiconductor industry; life sciences equipment applications; or applications requiring conveyor tracking and/or vision guidance.

This language can be easily applied to a wide range of mechanisms ranging from simple, single axis linear and rotary devices, to complex robots that require all of their axes to be simultaneously moved in a coordinated Cartesian fashion, to systems that have multiple robots that operate either independently or cooperatively. The control hardware for such systems can reside in a single box or can be distributed in a networked control architecture. Independent of the physical control architecture, GPL makes use of its built-in networking ability and knowledge of robot geometries (kinematics) to allow mechanisms to be centrally programmed and easily controlled in Cartesian coordinates.

To support such a wide range of applications and mechanisms, GPL has extensive motion control facilities including: blending of joint and Cartesian interpolated motions (“continuous path”); s-curve profiles; base and tool offsets; built-in kinematic models for a variety of robots; mathematics for manipulating robot and part positions and orientations; and frames of reference including moving frames of references for conveyor tracking.

GPL has been targeted to execute on the Precise Guidance Controller, which supports a networked control architecture. This controller includes a web based operator interface, a unified configuration and parameter database, integrated data logging capabilities, Category 3 (CAT-3) safety circuitry, and a number of facilities that simplify both local and remote diagnostics and maintenance.

The Guidance Controller can in fact be programmed using three different methods: (1) a forms based teach-and-repeat technique that executes “MotionBlocks” in response to digital input signals; (2) GPL as described in this document; or (3) by any standard Windows PC language, which remotely controls the system via a TCP/IP connection. The MotionBlocks method is ideal for simple applications, especially those where a PLC is providing overall cell control, and is extremely easy-to-use since no programming language knowledge is required. GPL has the advantage of being embedded within the controller and allows more complex applications to be addressed while still

permitting the controller to be operated in a standalone mode. The TCP/IP method allows programmers to leverage the capabilities of a PC (or other standard computing platforms) at runtime and to utilize the language of their choice.

In this document, we describe the features and syntax for the embedded system, the “Guidance Programming Language” (GPL).

GPL is a full-featured programming language. The fundamental syntax for GPL has been modeled after object-oriented forms of the Basic Language in order to provide a syntax and development environment that are familiar to many application developers. The Basic syntax has been extensively augmented with “classes” and “objects” that implement the motion control and vision capabilities. A Windows PC is required to develop and debug application programs but need not be connected when the controller is operating in automatic mode. Programmers who are familiar with Visual Basic .Net 2003 should be very comfortable with many of the computational and structural elements of GPL.

In the following sections, an introduction and overview of the GPL syntax is provided. Where it is important, we point out differences between GPL and the various variants of the Basic Language. These notes are highlighted by enclosing them within square brackets (“[]”). For more detailed information on individual instructions, objects and classes, methods, and properties, please see the GPL Dictionary document.

3. Statement Structure

Program lines can begin with an optional line label. Line labels must either be a valid variable name (e.g. label1) or an integer literal (e.g. 100). Line labels must always be followed by a colon (:). The label and colon can optionally be followed by a standard statement. [In VB6 and some other version of Basic, no label separation character was required.]

The standard line is formatted as follows:

```
Label: Statement ' Comment
```

An apostrophe (') marks the beginning of a comment. Comments can follow a standard statement on a line. Full line comments and blank lines are permitted.

Lines that begin with a # character are ignored. This is useful for defining "#Region" and "#End Region" lines that mark blocks of code that can be expanded or collapsed using the outlining feature of an editor.

Only one statement is permitted per line but a single statement can be continued on multiple lines. To continue a line, the end of the line must contain a space character followed by an under bar (" _"). Comment lines cannot be continued and lines cannot be broken at certain points (e.g. in the middle of a variable name).

There is no termination character at the end of a statement.

4. Data Type and Variables

Basic Data Types

Table 4-1 describes the basic data types that are supported in GPL:

Table 4-1: Basic Data Types Supported in GP

Supported Data Types	
Boolean	True (<>0) or False (=0) values.
Byte	Unsigned 8-bit integer numbers ranging from 0 to 255 in value.
Short	Signed 16-bit integer numbers.
Integer	Signed 32-bit integer numbers.
Single	32 bit single precision floating point numbers.
Double	64 bit double precision floating point numbers.
String	String variables can have values that are of arbitrary length
Object	Universal data types for object oriented Basic. Internally, this is a pointer to any type of data or group of data. The group of data can consist of a mix of data type values. All built-in system structures/classes are represented as objects. See a later section for a general description of Objects .

The following data types (Table 4-2) found in VB.Net and VB6 are not supported:

Table 4-2: Unsupported Data Types

Unsupported VB6/VB.Net Data Types	
Long or Int64	64-bit signed integer number
Decimal	96-bit signed integer scaled by a power of 10
Int16	Synonym for Short

Unsupported VB6/VB.Net Data Types	
Int32	Synonym for Integer
Char	16-bit Unicode
Variant	Old universal data type in VB6
Date	Date and time values

Identifier type characters and literal type characters, which are special postfix characters used to specify the type of variables and literal constants, are not supported. For example, in other systems, 725L identifies 725 as a **Long** constant and “Dim Abc!” declares Abc to be of type Single.

In general, the system automatically converts one type of variable to another as needed. For example, all integer types (**Boolean, Byte, Short, Integer**) are automatically converted to double precision floating point values when used in floating point expressions. However, when necessary, the following explicit conversion functions (Table 4-3) can be utilized to force a specific type conversion. These functions are all described in greater detail in the Software Reference Section.

Table 4-3: Explicit Conversion Functions for Forcing a Conversion

Explicit Type Conversion Functions	
CBool	Converts any numeric type or String to Boolean .
CByte	Converts any numeric type or String to Byte .
CDbl	Converts any numeric type or String to Double .
CInt	Converts any numeric type or String to Integer .
CShort	Converts any numeric type or String to Short .
CSng	Converts any numeric type or String to Single .
CStr	Converts any numeric type to String .
Hex	Converts an Integer value to String in Hexadecimal format.

All input characters are represented as 7-bit ASCII. Extended 8-bit ASCII and Unicode characters are not accepted in symbol names or in string literals.

Hexadecimal constant values are indicated by the prefix “&H”. This syntax can cause confusion with the “&” concatenation operator. For example, if you have a variable named “HEAD” then the expression: String &HEAD causes a syntax error since &HEAD is interpreted as the hex value “EAD”. To avoid this problem, insert a space after “&” if it is being used as a concatenation operator.

Octal constant values are indicated by the prefix “&O”. This syntax can cause confusion with the “&” concatenation operator. For example, if you have a variable named “O2” then the expression: String &O2 causes a syntax error since &O2 is interpreted as the octal value “2”. To avoid this problem, insert a space after “&” if it is being used as a concatenation operator.

As a programming convenience, there are a number of constant values that are predefined in the language. These constants all begin with “GPL_”. These constants are listed in [Table 4-4](#), and their use is described in the *PreciseFlex Library language dictionary* pages.

Table 4-4: Constant Values

GPL Constant Values	
GPL_CR	ASCII carriage return character (13).
GPL_LF	ASCII line feed character (10).
GPL_Righty	Assert right shouldered configuration (&H01).
GPL_Lefty	Assert left shouldered configuration (&H02).
GPL_Above	Assert elbow above wrist configuration (&H04).
GPL_Below	Assert elbow below wrist configuration (&H08).
GPL_Flip	Assert wrist pitched up configuration (&H10).
GPL_NoFlip	Assert wrist pitched down configuration (&H20).
GPL_Single	Assert restrict wrist position to within +/- 180 degrees (&H1000).

Variable Declarations

Variable names can be mixed case (upper and lower case characters), but names are not case sensitive, i.e. `Abc`, `ABC`, `abc`, `aBC` all refer to the same variable.

Within a given context, variable names must be unique even if they refer to variables of different data types and variable names cannot match system keywords. For example, you cannot have a string variable named “value1” and an integer variable with the same name. System keywords generally refer to words such as “**For**”, “**If**”, “**Dim**” that are expected to denote a built-in language capability.

Variable names must start with either a letter or an underscore “_”. This character can be followed by a sequence of up to 127 additional letters, numbers, and underscore characters for a total of 128. If a variable name starts with “_” it must be followed by at least one other character other than another underscore to distinguish it from a line-continuation.

Dim is the basic data type declaration statement within procedures for local, i.e. automatic, variables. If **Static** is used in place of **Dim** within a procedure, the value of the variable is preserved from one execution of the procedure to the next. **Dim** variables, including array variables, are

initialized to 0 (numbers), **False (Booleans)**, or **Nothing** (structures, objects, or classes), each time their enclosing procedure is executed.

```
Dim ii As Short
Static jj As Short
```

Variables defined within a module, outside of a procedure, are accessible by all procedures in the module and, like **Static** variables, their values are preserved independently of the execution of any procedure. If such variables are defined with **Private** or **Dim**, the variables are local to the module and cannot be accessed by procedures in other modules. If **Public** is used instead to declare a variable, the variable is accessible by all procedures within all modules loaded into the controller's memory.

```
Module Test
    Dim Count As Integer      ' Invisible to other modules,
                              ' global in this module
    Private nBlocks As Integer ' Same as declaration above
    Public TotalArea As Single ' Visible to all procedures in
                              ' all modules within project.
End Module
```

Variables declared within a module can also be accessed by preceding the variable name with the module name. This method of specifying a variable is required for cases when the same **Public** variable name is found in more than one module and it is unclear from the name alone which variable is being referenced.

```
Module Test1
    Public aa As Integer
    Public bb As Integer
End Module

Module Test2
    Public aa As Integer
End Module

Module Test3
    Sub MyProc
        Dim ii As Integer
        ii = bb           ' Okay since there is only bb
        ii = Test1.bb    ' Okay but not necessary
        ii = aa           ' Error since aa is duplicated
        ii = Test1.aa    ' Okay since it is clear which aa
    End Sub
End Module
```

In GPL, no matter where a variable is declared in a procedure, the scope of a variable extends throughout the procedure with the restriction that variables can only be declared in the outermost level of a procedure.

```
For ii = 1 To 10
    Dim jj As Integer    ' Not allowed
    kk = ii              ' Forward reference to kk is allowed.
Next ii

Dim kk As Integer
```

In the future, we may change the scoping rules to follow other variants of Basic, such as VB.NET, more closely.

Multiple declaration clauses may appear in a single statement.

```
Dim n As Integer, x As Double
```

The data type must always be specified.

```
Dim BlackObject1      ' Invalid
```

If multiple variables are declared within a single statement and a variable's type is not specified, its type is defined by the next type definition in the statement [this is different from VB6 where all untyped variables became **Variants**]. Note, if a **New** clause (see below) is used, only a single variable name may appear to the left of the **As** keyword.

```
Dim ii, jj As Integer' Both ii and jj are of type Integer
```

Variable or constant values may be initialized by adding an initialization clause that begins with an “=”. For example,

```
Dim Count As Integer = 1    ' Sets Count to 1
```

Each time this statement is encountered during execution, its value is initialized. If an initializer clause is used, only a single variable name may appear to the left of the **As** keyword.

An arbitrary expression may appear to the right of the “=”. If the variable being initialized is an object or structure, a **New** keyword may appear to the right of the “=”.

Be careful if you call a user-defined function as part of the initializer expression since some variables may not be initialized yet.

Module-level variables are initialized once when a project is started and are processed in the order in which they appear in the module. They are initialized before any user-defined procedures are executed (except in the case where you call a user-defined function from an initializer). Errors that occur while initializing variables are listed as part of a hidden procedure named “_Init”.

The **New** keyword may appear in a clause that declares an object or structure. The **New** may appear immediately after the **As** keyword, or may appear immediately after the “=” in an initialization clause. **New** may not appear in both places within the same statement.

```
Dim Loc1 As New Location      ' Creates a location
                               ' class instance
Dim Loc1 As Location = New Location ' Equivalent to above
```

A **Const** keyword indicates that the variable is read-only and cannot be changed during normal execution. Only the initialization clause can set the value of the **Const** keyword.

```
Const MaxCount As Integer = 10
MaxCount = MaxCount+1          ' Invalid
```

GPL only supports strong typing, i.e. all variables must be declared in a **Dim**, **Static**, **Private**, or **Public** statement although the specific type of a variable may be excluded and will be automatically set to the default. [VB.Net allows strong typing to be disabled with the “**Option Strict Off**” statement.]

Data Type Arrays

Any of the data types described above, including objects, support array variables. The rank (dimension) of an array can be from 1 to 4. The number of array elements within a dimension is limited by available memory.

The first index in an array is always element 0. When you declare an array size, you are specifying the upper bound for a dimension. So, the number of elements for a dimension is always equal to the upper bound+1. For example:

```
Dim Count(9) As Integer      ' Allocates array of 10 elements
```

Versions of Basic such as VB6 supported means for defined ranges of indices that started with an arbitrary first index number (e.g. “10 to 20”) and also statements such as “**Option Base 1**” that forced the first index to always be 1. However, VB.Net always starts arrays with index 0 and this is the convention that is supported in GPL.

The **Dim** statement is used to declare an array variable. The supported forms of this statement are as follows:

```
Dim MyArray(3, 4) As Integer
Dim MyArray(,) As Integer
```

The first statement specifies a 2-dimensional array with 4 elements (0 to 3) in the first dimension and 5 (0 to 4) in the second, for a total of 20 elements. These elements are allocated when the **Dim** statement is executed.

The second statement simply specifies a 2-dimensional array, but does not allocate any elements. Before you can use the array, you must either assign an array to it, or you must use a **ReDim** statement to allocate the elements.

When array elements are allocated, numeric arrays have the value 0 and object arrays have the value **Nothing**. Initialization of array values using an “=” clause is not supported in GPL.

Once an array has been declared and its dimensionality established, the **ReDim** instruction can be used to initialize or change the number of elements within any dimension. **ReDim** can be applied to any array, so no distinction is made between dynamically sizeable arrays and fixed arrays. However, **ReDim** cannot be used to change the rank of an array and **ReDim** cannot be used to initially declare an array. Some examples of **ReDim** are as follows:

```
Dim Count() As Integer
ReDim Count(9)
Dim TwoDCount(2, 3) As Integer
ReDim TwoDCount(1, 100)
```

Whole arrays may be assigned to each other with a single statement. When that occurs, the data are not actually copied, but a pointer to the data in the right-hand array is copied to the left-hand array variable so that both array variables access the same data. This behavior is similar to object variables. For example:

```
Dim CountA(9) As Integer
Dim CountB() As Integer
CountB = CountA           ' CountB now refers to the same
                          ' data as CountA
```

When single array elements are passed as procedure arguments, they behave the same as non-array variables of the same type. When whole array elements are passed as procedure arguments, pointers to either the array value () or the array variable () are passed, and the behavior is the same as when passing objects. **ByVal ByRef**

All arrays of variables are members of the built-in **Array** class. You can use properties of this class (Table 4-5) to determine the properties of any variable array.

Table 4-5: Properties of Array Class

Property	Description
<i>array</i> . GetUpperBound (<i>dim</i>)	Returns the upper bound for a particular dimension of an array. The lower bound is always 0, so the total number of elements in this dimension is one greater than the upper bound.
<i>array</i> . Length	The total number of elements in the entire array, in all dimensions.
<i>array</i> . Rank	Returns the rank, which is the number of dimensions, in the array.

These property methods may only be used with an entire array, not with a subset or individual array element.

Do not be confused when using the **Length** property with string arrays, for example, if you declare:
Dim sarray(3) As String:

sarray.**Length** is the number of elements in the array, in this case 4 (from 0 to 3).
sarray(0).**Length** is the length of the string contained in sarray(0), initially 0.

Scope of Names

Variables, constants, and procedures all have names. The section of a project where these names are known is called the *scope* of the name. Attempts to access a name outside its scope results in an "Undefined symbol" error because a valid name cannot be found by the compiler.

In general, a name is known within the block where it is declared, and within any blocks contained in the block where it is declared. For example, a variable declared in a procedure is known only in that procedure, but a variable declared in a module is known in all procedures contained in that module.

To access a name from outside the block where it is declared, the name must be declared as **Public**. Public names can be accessed from anywhere, provided that the path to the name is fully specified. As a special case, **Public** module-level names may be accessed without the module name being specified, provided that the name is unambiguous in all modules.

For example:

```
Module MyMod
  Public ModVar As Integer
  Public Class My_class
    Public Shared MaxSize As Integer
    Private Shared Size2 As Integer
  End Class
End Module

Module GPL
  Public Sub Main
    My_class.MaxSize = 100      ' Invalid, path not complete
    MyMod.My_class.MaxSize = 100 ' Okay
    MyMod.My_class.Size2 = 100 ' Invalid, private variable
    ModVar = 20                ' Okay, special case
  End Sub
End Module
```

5. Objects and Classes

Objects and Classes Overview

“Objects” and “classes” are the basis of object-oriented programming. A class defines a collection of related data and the procedures that operate on the data. In a sense, a class can be thought of as a template. If multiple copies (or “instances”) of a class are required to store distinct sets of data, multiple objects of that class are created.

Objects and classes are used within GPL to provide additional functionality that is not part of the standard Basic Language and to organize functions that are related into easy-to-access groups. This functionality includes: mathematical operations, I/O operations, motion specifications, and robot control.

This section describes the general concepts associated with objects and classes. For illustration purposes, some of the objects and classes that are built into GPL are mentioned briefly in this section. The detailed description of these built-in GPL objects and classes are provided in later sections.

Objects, Fields, Properties and Methods

An object is a collection of related data and the procedures that operate on the data.

As opposed to a traditional data array, objects can and normally do contain many different types of data. For example, the GPL **Location Object** that represents robot and part positions contains an array of **Double** values to store a position and orientation, an **Integer** value for special flag bits, a **Boolean** to indicate a choice of reference frames, a pointer to another object, plus other data. The values stored within an object are called “*fields*”. Generally, *fields* are accessed via “*properties*” of the object. The *properties* provide read and write access to field values and allow the values to be formatted, processed or grouped. Each *field* can have one, multiple, or no *properties* associated with it. For example, several *properties* of the **Location Object** access the same position and orientation *field* data to allow the data to be presented as individual axis positions or a set of all axes positions or a Cartesian position and orientation depending upon how the **Location** is defined.

From a data point of view, objects are similar to C structures. However, in addition to grouping data, objects also have specific procedures defined for operating on the object's *fields*. These object-specific procedures are called "*methods*". For example, the **Location Object** has *methods* for inverting its Cartesian position and for combining the positions of two **Location Objects**.

Depending upon how they are defined, some *methods* operate like subroutines while others return values like functions. If a *method* returns a value, it can be used in any expression that is appropriate for the type of its returned value. If a *method* operates like a subroutine, it must appear in a statement by itself and cannot appear within an expression. Either type of method can have a list of required arguments in the same manner as subroutines and functions.

More generally, *fields*, *properties*, and *methods* are referred to as "*members*" of an object or class. For the most part, you should only need to concern yourself with *properties* and *methods* of objects.

Classes of Objects

A class is a formal description and template for a type of object and defines its *fields*, *properties* and *methods*.

In general, there are two types of classes: *non-global* and *global*. A *non-global* class does not hold any data and relies upon its objects for data storage. Each object for a given class will have the same types of *members* but will contain an independent set of values for each *member*. For example, a typical robot application will have multiple **Location Objects**. Each **Location** will store the data that describes a specific part or robot position. However, all of the **Location Objects** will be derived from the same **Location Class** and will have the same types of *members*.

A *global* class is like a *non-global* class in that it defines all of the *fields*, *properties* and *methods* associated with this class. However, a *global* class is used when a single set or no set of data exists, so that a *global* class never has any objects. For example, many of the arithmetic functions (e.g. sine, cosine, square root) are part of the **Math Class**. This is done as a convenience to allow these functions to be grouped together and therefore easily accessed. However, the **Math Class** has no fields, no properties and no data, just methods. Consequently, the *global Math Class* has no objects.

The Dot "." Operator

Within GPL, a period character ".", also known as the *dot operator*, serves as a preface character to identify a member of a class or an object. To access a specific member of an object or class, you would write:

`object.member` or `class.member`

For *global classes*, since there are no objects, only the “*class.member*” form of reference can be used. For *non-global* classes, most references are to the values of objects and are written as “*object.member*”, although the “*class.member*” form is permitted for certain methods.

By making use of the *dot operator*, *properties* of objects can be used in assignment statements and expressions in exactly the same manner as you would employ any other variable of the same data type. Also, the *dot operator* permits *methods* to be invoked in the same manner as you would invoke any subroutine or function.

Some examples of the *dot operator* are as follows:

```
Dim Pos_x, Value As Double
Pos_x = location_object.X+2 ' Get x-axis displacement + 2
location_object.X = 3     ' Set x-axis displacement property
Value = Math.Sqrt(3)      ' Sqrt is method of Math Class
location_object.Here      ' Invoke method to record position
```

The *dot operator* can be used multiple times in succession if a property or method returns another object. For example, the method that inverts a **Location** returns a **Location** value. Therefore, the following could be written to first invert a **Location** and then extract the x-axis displacement of the result.

```
Pos_x = location_object.Inverse.X
```

Object Variables and the New Clause

While the members of an object can be treated like any other variable of the same data type, *object variables* are quite different from other variables. That’s because an *object variable* does not contain the value of the object, it contains a reference (or “pointer”) to the memory where the value is stored. For example, if we declare a **Location** variable:

```
Dim My_loc As Location
```

This statement creates a pointer, *My_loc*, to an object of the **Location Class**. However, at this time, the *My_loc object variable* has not allocated any storage for the value of the object and so its pointer is set to “**Nothing**”. If you attempt to access a member of *My_loc* at this time, an error would be generated. In general, before an object can be used, you must either allocate memory to the pointer (see below), copy a pointer to an existing value or call a method that returns a value pointer.

The standard way of creating (“allocating”) an object value is by using a **New** clause. This clause may appear in a **Dim** statement or in an assignment statement and has the following syntax:

```
New class_name
```

where *class_name* is the name of the class for which you want to create an object value.

For example, the following three cases all declare a location *object variable* and allocate a **Location Object** value for it.

```
Dim My_loc As New Location ' Create new location value
-or-
Dim My_loc As Location = New Location ' Same as above
-or-
Dim My_loc As Location      ' Declares variable only
My_loc = New Location       ' Creates the location value
```

In general, if you are unsure of whether to allocate a data block or not, you should probably go ahead and allocate using the **New** clause. Using **New** unnecessarily will be somewhat less efficient, but GPL automatically takes care of managing allocated object values and so memory is never lost (i.e. you cannot create a memory “leak”).

Copying Object Variables and Values

Since an *object variable* is a pointer to a value, the following simple assignment statement does not copy the value of an object, it copies an object pointer:

```
My_loc = Another_loc
```

At the conclusion of this instruction, `My_loc` and `Another_loc` both point to the same object value. Furthermore, if `My_loc` was the only pointer to a different object value, that object value will have been deleted (“deallocated”).

This use of pointers allows some sophisticated programming techniques, but it can also be confusing. For example, after the assignment statement above, changing a *property* of either `My_loc` or `Another_loc` will alter the *property* as seen by the other object. For example:

```
Dim My_Loc1 As New Location ' Create new location value
Dim My_Loc2 As Location    ' Does not create value
Dim tmp As Double
My_Loc1.X = 10
My_Loc2 = My_Loc1          ' Both Loc2 and Loc1 now
                             ' have the same value pointer
tmp = My_Loc2.X            ' tmp gets the value 10
My_Loc1.X = 20
tmp = My_Loc2.X            ' tmp now gets the value 20
```

Clone Method

Many classes include a **Clone** method to create an exact copy of an object. The value of the **Clone** method is a new object value that is the same as the referenced object. When this value is assigned to a variable, it is independent of the original object value.

For example:

```
Dim My_Loc1 As New Location ' Create new location value
Dim My_Loc2 As Location    ' Does not create value
Dim tmp As Double

My_Loc1.X = 10
My_Loc2 = My_Loc1.Clone    ' Loc2 gets a copy of Loc1
tmp = My_Loc2.X            ' tmp gets the value 10
My_Loc1.X = 20
tmp = My_Loc2.X            ' tmp still gets the value 10
```

Nothing

The keyword **Nothing** is a built-in function that returns an object with no value. If you assign **Nothing** to an object variable, its previous pointer is removed and any attempt to access the variable results in an error. When an object variable is newly declared its value is **Nothing** unless a **New** clause was specified.

Assigning **Nothing** to an object variable releases the memory associated with the object value, provided it is not being used elsewhere.

Objects as Procedure Arguments

Like other variables and values, object values may be passed as procedure arguments. Object values are always passed as pointers, so the operation of **ByVal** and **ByRef** is a little different from that of other arguments.

ByVal

When an object value is passed **ByVal**, a pointer to the object *value* is passed to the called procedure. That means that changes made to the value via the called procedure parameter are seen by the caller. But changes made to the *variable* are not seen by the caller.

For example:

```
Sub My_Sub (ByVal Loc As Location)
    Loc.X = 20                ' Changes original value
    Loc = New Location        ' Create new value locally
```

```
        Loc.X = 30                ' Changes local value
    End Sub

Sub Main()
    Dim Loc1 As New Location      ' Create new location value
    Dim Loc2 As Location         ' Does not create value
    Dim tmp As Double
    Loc2 = Loc1                  ' Copy value pointer
    My_Sub ( Loc1 )              ' Pass pointer to Loc1 value
    tmp = Loc1.X                 ' Gets 20 from original value
    tmp = Loc2.X                 ' Gets 20 from original value
End Sub
```

ByRef

When an object value is passed **ByRef**, a pointer to the object *variable* is passed to the called procedure. That means that changes made to either the *value* or the *variable* via the called procedure parameter are seen by the caller.

For example:

```
Sub My_Sub (ByRef Loc As Location)
    Loc.X = 20                    ' Changes original value
    Loc = New Location            ' Caller variable changed
    Loc.X = 30                    ' Changes new value
End Sub

Sub Main()
    Dim Loc1 As New Location      ' Create new location value
    Dim Loc2 As Location         ' Does not create value
    Dim tmp As Double
    Loc2 = Loc1                  ' Copy value pointer
    My_Sub ( Loc1 )              ' Pass pointer to Loc1 variable
    tmp = Loc1.X                 ' Gets 30 from new value
    tmp = Loc2.X                 ' Gets 20 from original value
End Sub
```

User-Defined Classes

In addition to using the built-in classes, users can define their own classes within GPL. User defined classes are a very powerful feature that can be of assistance is organizing a GPL project. *However, for programmers that are not comfortable with object oriented programming, user defined classes do not need to be used and this section can be skipped.* More traditional arrays of numeric and string variables are supported in GPL and can be utilized to implement a complete application.

A user class definition begins with a **Class** statement and ends with an **EndClass** statement. A class may be defined at the top level of a file, within a module, or within another class. User-defined classes serve as a template for objects that contain arbitrary variable fields and are associated with procedures that create and modify the objects.

Class variables, procedures, and nested classes can be declared as either **Public** or **Private**. By default these items are all **Private**. A **Private** item may not be referenced outside of the class in which it is declared. A **Public** item may be referenced outside of a class by using the syntax: *class_name.item_name* or *object_name.item_name*.

Class Variables

By default, variables declared within a class are templates for fields within objects of that class. Independent copies of these variables are found in each object of the class and do not exist outside of an object. If a non-shared class variable has an initializer, that field is set to the initializer value whenever an object is created.

If a class variable is declared **Shared**, only a single copy of the variable exists and is accessed independently of any objects. A **PublicShared** variable is normally referenced by the syntax: *class_name.item_name*, to emphasize that it is associated with the class and not the object. A **PublicShared** variable may also be accessed by the syntax: *object_name.item_name* which results in the same single value being referenced. The second syntax example should be avoided to prevent confusing it with a non-shared variable. If a **Shared** class variable has an initializer clause, the initialization occurs once when the main thread starts.

An internal **Sub** procedure named *_Init* is automatically generated to perform shared variable initialization. An internal **Sub** procedure named *_New* is automatically created to perform initialization when a new object is created. Do not attempt to create procedures with these names.

Class Procedures

Sub, **Function**, and **Property** procedures may all be members of a class. By default, procedures declared within a class are associated with an object of that class. They are invoked by the syntax: *object_name.procedure_name*. Within such procedures, fields and other procedures in the class may be referenced without specifying *object_name* as a prefix. Instead, the object that was referenced when the procedure was initially called is assumed.

If a class procedure is declared as **Shared**, it is not associated with any object, and may be invoked simply as *class_name.procedure_name*. Since there is no object associated with this procedure, it cannot reference non-shared fields or class procedures unless it explicitly includes an *object_name* as a prefix.

In the example below, the variable *count* is a field within the class *cc*. The procedure *Main* creates a new object, *aa*, of class *cc* and sets its *count* field to 5. When the *Inc_count* procedure is called, it is passed the object *aa*. When *Inc_count* executes, its references to *count* are actually references to the field *count* within the passed *aa* object.

```
Public Class cc
    Public count As Integer      ' Count is a field in a cc-class
obj
    Public Sub Increment
```

```
        count = count+1          ' Inc count field in the current
obj
    End Sub
End Class

Sub Main()
    Dim aa As New cc            ' Creates a new object of class
cc
    Dim bb As New cc            ' Creates a new object of class
cc
    aa.count = 5                ' Sets count field in the object
aa
    aa.Increment                ' Calls Sub Increment for object
aa
    bb.count = 20                ' Sets the field count in object
bb
    bb.Increment                ' Calls Sub Increment for object
bb
    Console.WriteLine(aa.count) ' Writes 6
    Console.WriteLine(bb.count) ' Writes 21
End Sub
```

Property procedures improve readability by allowing assignment statements to call procedures that get and set data values. Reading a **Property** value is very similar to calling a function that returns a value. Writing a **Property** value looks like an assignment statement. Read-only properties cannot be written, and write-only properties cannot be read.

A **Property** definition must contain a *get block* (that begins with a **Get** statement and ends with an **End Get** statement) or a *set block* (that begins with a **Set** statement and ends with an **End Set** statement) or both. When a **Property** value is read, the *get block* procedure is executed. When a **Property** is written, the *set block* procedure is executed.

In the example below, the **PropertySize** is defined to get and set the internal field value *size_in*. Additionally, the **Set** block clips the value to make sure that *size_in* is always in the range 0 to 10. Since *size_in* is declared as **Private**, it cannot be changed directly from the *Main* procedure.

```
Public Class cc
    Private size_in As Integer ' size_in is field in cc-class
    Public Property Size As Integer
        Get
            Return size_in    ' Simply return the field value
        End Get
        Set (value As Integer)
            If value > 10 Then
                value = 10
            ElseIf value < 0 Then
                value = 0
            End If
            size_in = value    ' Set clipped value in field
        End Set
    End Property
End Class
```

```

Sub Main()
    Dim aa As New cc           ' Creates a new object of class cc
    Dim ii As Integer
    aa.Size = 20              ' Calls the Size Set Property
    ii = aa.Size              ' Calls the Size Get Property
    Console.WriteLine(ii)    ' Displays value 10
    aa.size_in = 5           ' Invalid since size_in is Private
End Sub

```

Me Object

When a non-shared class procedure is called, it is automatically associated with an object. This object is used implicitly whenever a non-shared procedure or field from the current class is referenced. This associated object may be accessed directly by the built-in object **Me**. This object always has the type of the current class. You can use the **Me** object when calling procedures that require an object as a parameter. If you attempt to use **Me** in a shared procedure, or one not associated with a class, an exception occurs.

Constructors

When an object is created with a **New** keyword, all fields in the new object are normally set to 0 (for numeric fields), empty (for string fields), and undefined (for object fields).

If a **Sub** procedure named *New* is defined for a class, it is automatically called whenever a new object is created. The *New* procedure may include an argument list. There may be multiple overloaded *New* procedures, each with a different argument list.

For example:

```

Public Class cc
    Public count As Integer    ' Count is field in cc-class
    Public Sub New
        count = 25            ' Set count to 25
    End Sub
    Public Sub New (value As Integer)
        count = value
    End Sub
End Class

Sub Main()
    Dim aa As New cc          ' Calls first New procedure
    Dim bb As New cc(15)     ' Calls second New procedure
    Console.WriteLine(aa.count) ' Writes 25
    Console.WriteLine(bb.count) ' Writes 15
End Sub

```

Limitations

All objects in GPL must have an explicit class specified. You cannot simply declare a variable as type **Object**. That means that late binding of objects is not supported.

6. Arithmetic Operations

Arithmetic Expressions

Table 6-1 documents the order in which elements of an arithmetic expression are evaluated (i.e. the order of precedence). The operations are presented in their order of precedence starting with the highest precedence, that is, those elements that are evaluated first. For operators that have an equal precedence, elements are evaluated left-to-right. Parentheses can be used to change the order of evaluation. Operations within parentheses are always evaluated before operations that are outside of the parentheses.

Table 6-1: Arithmetic Expressions, Order of Precedence

Operation	Symbol	Notes
Exponentiation	^	Raises a value by a specified power. For example "x ^ 3" cubes the value of x. Powers have to be integer numbers if the number being operated on is negative. Otherwise, powers can have fractional parts.
Unary negation	-	This is a negative sign in front of a variable or constant that does not indicate a subtraction operation. For example, 2 * -4 is valid and produces a value of -8.
Multiplication/division	* , /	This indicates the standard multiplication and division operations. For division, even if the divisor and the dividend are integer values, the result is computed as a real number with a fractional part.
Integer division	\	This indicates an integer division operation. Independent of the data type for the divisor and dividend, the result is truncated to an integer number. For example, "2.3 \ 2" yields a value of 1.
Modulus calculation	Mod	Computes the modulus of two numbers. For "x Mod y", this is equivalent to dividing x by y and returning the remainder. For example, "13.3 Mod 2" is equal to 1.3.
Addition/subtraction	+ , -	Standard addition and subtraction operations. Automatically converts integer values to floating point and computes the result in floating point. If the value is stored into an integer variable type, the resulting answer is converted to integer before storage.
String concatenation	+ or &	Either of the two symbols can be used to indicate string concatenation. However, the use of "&" is preferred in place of "+" to clearly specify a string concatenation operation instead of numerical addition.
Arithmetic bit shift	<< , >>	These are arithmetic shift operations and not bit rotations or logical shifts. For left shifts, a 0 is always shifted into the low-order bit. For right shifts, for positive numbers a 0 is shifted into the high-order bit and a 1 is shifted in for negative numbers.

Operation	Symbol	Notes
Relational comparisons	=, <>, <, >, <=, >=, Is	The first six relational operator symbols represent “equal to”, “not equal to”, “less than”, “greater than”, “less than or equal to”, and “greater than or equal to”. The operands to the left and right of these relational operators can either both be numerical or string values. The Is operator determines if two object references refer to the same object. For example "object1 Is Nothing ".
Logical NOT	Not	Converts a False (=0) value to True (-1) and any True (<>0) value to False (0).
Logical or bitwise AND	And, AndAlso	Performs a logical AND operation unless either of the operands is not a Boolean value, in which case, a bitwise operation is performed. All operands of And are always evaluated even if an earlier operand has already decided the result. AndAlso prematurely stops evaluation if the result is already False . The following illustrates the logical AND operation: True And True -> True True And False -> False False And True -> False False And False -> False
Logical or bitwise OR	Or, OrElse	Performs a logical OR operation unless either of the operands is not a Boolean value, in which case, a bitwise operation is performed. All operands of Or are always evaluated even if an earlier operand has already decided the result. OrElse prematurely stops evaluation if the result is already True . The following illustrates the logical OR operation: True Or True -> True True Or False -> True False Or True -> True False Or False -> False
Logical or bitwise XOR	Xor	Performs a logical Exclusive Or operation unless either of the operands is not a Boolean value, in which case, a bitwise operation is performed. The following illustrates the logical XOR operation: True Xor True -> False True Xor False -> True False Xor True -> True False Xor False -> False

5.1.1. In general, most arithmetic expressions evaluation with GPL is performed in double precision floating point. For example, when two numbers are added together, they are first converted to **Double**'s if necessary and then the addition operation is performed. The results of expressions are converted to the appropriate data types when a variable is assigned a value. Because of this, GPL generally executes more quickly when variables are declared as **Double**'s than the other types of numeric values.

Arithmetic Functions and Methods

Table 6-2 summarizes the standard arithmetic and trigonometric operations that are provided in GPL. As a convenience during editing, the operations within the first table are provided as methods of the **Math Class**. This allows programmers to display a pick list of the **Math** methods and easily see all of operations that are available. The second table documents functions that are not part of the **Math Class**. These functions are provided in this manner for compatibility with other Basic Languages.

As is standard in GPL, conversions between different arithmetic types, e.g. **Integer**, **Single**, **Double**, are automatically performed as required. So, it is not necessary to have different variations on these methods and functions to deal with the different possible mixes of input parameter data types. Also, these methods and functions generally produce results that are formatted as **Double**'s. Results are automatically converted to smaller data types as necessary, e.g. **Double** -> **Integer**, and will not generate an error so long as numeric overflow does not occur.

For more information on these methods and functions, please see the Reference Documentation section.

Table 6-2: Arithmetic and Trigonometric Operations in GPL

Math Methods	Description
Math.Abs (<i>expression</i>)	Returns the absolute value of any arithmetic expression.
Math.Acos (<i>cosine</i>)	Returns the angle that corresponds to a specified cosine value.
Math.Asin (<i>sine</i>)	Returns the angle that corresponds to a specified sine value.
Math.Atan (<i>tangent</i>)	Returns the angle that corresponds to a specified tangent value.
Math.Atan2 (<i>sine_factor</i> , <i>cosine_factor</i>)	Returns the angle that corresponds to the quotient of two values.
Math.Ceiling (<i>value</i>)	Returns the smallest integer number that is greater than or equal to a value.
Math.Cos (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the cosine of a specified angle.
Math.Cosh (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the hyperbolic cosine of a specified angle.
Math.E	Returns the natural logarithmic base constant.
Math.Exp (<i>exponent</i>)	Returns the natural logarithmic constant, e , raised to a specified power.
Math.Floor (<i>value</i>)	Returns the largest integer number that is less than or equal to a value.
Math.Log (<i>value</i>)	Returns the natural logarithm (base-e logarithm) of a specified value.
Math.Log10 (<i>value</i>)	Returns the base-10 logarithm of a specified value.
Math.Max (<i>value_1</i> , <i>value_2</i>)	Returns the larger of two values.
Math.Min (<i>value_1</i> , <i>value_2</i>)	Returns the smaller of two values.
Math.PI	Returns the constant π .
Math.Pow (<i>base</i> , <i>exponent</i>)	Returns a specified base value raised to a specified power.
Math.Sign (<i>value</i>)	Returns a number that indicates the sign of a specified value.
Math.Sin (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the sine of a specified angle.
Math.Sinh (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the hyperbolic sine of a specified angle.
Math.Sqrt (<i>value</i>)	Returns the square root of a value.
Math.Tan (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the tangent of a specified angle.
Math.Tanh (<i>angle</i>)	Returns the hyperbolic tangent of a specified angle.

Built-in Functions	Description
Fix (<i>number</i>)	Returns the integer portion of any numeric type by truncating towards zero.
Int (<i>number</i>)	Returns the integer portion of any numeric type by truncating towards negative infinity.
Rnd (<i>seed</i>)	Returns a pseudo random number.

7. Strings and String Expressions

Strings and String Expressions Overview

String variables, assignment statements, and expressions provide the means for storing and manipulating text within GPL. As such, **Strings** are also the primary means for transferring data in and out of the system via the serial communications ports, the file system, and the Ethernet interface.

String variables store a series of ASCII characters and can be of arbitrary length. However, **String** operations have been optimized to execute most efficiently on **Strings** that are 128 characters or less in length.

String constants must be delimited by double quote marks, e.g. "Hello world", and can at most be 128 characters in length. To embed a double quote mark within a **String** constant, enter two double quote marks in a row, e.g. "Tom said, ""Hello world""".

As with other variables, **String** arrays are supported and the values of procedure level **String** variables can be initialized in **DIM** statements. For example,

```
Dim name As String = "Charlie"
```

A number of easy-to-use functions are provided for converting between **String** values and numerical values, e.g. **CStr**, **CDbl**, **CInt**. Each of these built-in functions was described earlier in the section on Basic Data Types.

As a convenience, GPL automatically converts a **String** value to a **Double** whenever a numerical value is expected and a **String** is encountered instead. For example, the following statements are legal:

```
Dim a As Double  
a = 2.34 + "1.01"      ' Legal. a will be equal to 3.35
```

However, it is generally better practice to utilize the explicit conversion routines rather than relying upon the automatic conversions. The automatic conversions can result in some computations whose results may not be clear.

In most cases, when a **String** value is required as an input, a **String** expression can be provided. A **String** expression can consist of a **String** variable, constant, function or method or a concatenation of two or more of these **String** elements.

Two or more **String** elements can be concatenated together by utilizing the concatenation operator, "&". Also, for compatibility with other Basic compilers, the "+" can alternatively be used to indicate concatenation. However, given the automatic **String** to numeric conversion features of the language, the use of the "+" can make it less obvious whether a statement is intended to produce a **String** or a numeric result. Therefore, the use of the "&" concatenation operator is recommended over the "+".

The following is an example of **String** concatenation.

```
Dim s1, s2 As String
s1 = "Joe's"
s2 = s1 & " balance: " & CStr(10.2) ' s2 = "Joe's balance:
10.2"
```

Since **String** values are often generated by appending additional text on to the end of the value of a **String** variable, for computational efficiency, the concatenation assignment operator is supported. For example,

```
s1 &= " more" is equivalent to s1 = s1 & " more"
```

The advantage of the concatenation assignment operator is that appended text is directed added onto the end of the variable's value. In the standard assignment statement, the value, s1, is copied to an intermediate variable where it is concatenated with the appended **String** value, " more". The resulting value then replaces the original value of the variable.

The values of two **Strings** can be compared using the **String.Compare** method. In addition, **Strings** can be compared using the standard arithmetic relational comparison operators (=, <>, <, >, <=, >=). Comparisons performed using the relational operators are always performed case sensitive, i.e. "A" is not equal to "a". This is equivalent to specifying "**Option Compare Binary**" in some Basic compilers. To perform case insensitive comparisons, use the **Compare** method or force both **String** values to be upper or lower case.

Internally, **String** variables are implemented using many of the same procedures as those that apply to **Objects**. Consequently, many of the basic string manipulation operations are provided as methods and properties that can be applied to **String** variables. However, unlike other built-in **Objects**, when a **String** variable is created, it automatically has its data storage allocated. So, the use of the **New** qualifier is not needed in connections with **String** variables and is not permitted.

[Table 7-1](#) summarizes each of the **String** methods and properties.

Table 7-1: String Methods and Properties

Member	Type	Description
String .Compare	Method	Compares the values of two Strings in either a case sensitive or case insensitive manner.
<i>string</i> .IndexOf	Method	Searches for an exact match of a substring within the <i>string</i> variable and returns the starting position if found (0-n).
<i>string</i> . Length	Property	Returns the number of characters in the String .
<i>string</i> . Split	Method	Divides the <i>string</i> variable value into a series of substrings based upon a specified separator character and returns the array of substrings.
<i>string</i> .Substring	Method	Returns a substring of the <i>string</i> variable starting at a specific character position and with a specified length.
<i>string</i> .ToLower	Method	Returns a copy of the <i>string</i> with all lower case characters.
<i>string</i> .ToUpper	Method	Returns a copy of the <i>string</i> with all upper case characters.
<i>string</i> . Trim	Method	Trims off characters or white space from the start and end of a String variable value.
<i>string</i> .TrimEnd	Method	Trims off characters or white space from the end of a String variable value.
<i>string</i> .TrimStart	Method	Trims off characters or white space from the start of a String variable value.

For compatibility with older Basic compilers, the following **String** functions are provided in [Table 7-2](#). In many instances, very similar functionality is provided by the **String** Members listed in the previous table.

Table 7-2: String Functions

Built-in String Functions	Description
Asc (<i>string</i>)	Converts the first character of a String to its equivalent ASCII numerical code.
Chr (<i>expression</i>)	Given a numerical ASCII code, a String that consists of the equivalent ASCII character code is returned.
Format (<i>expression</i> , <i>format_s</i>)	Converts a numerical value to a String value based upon a specified output format specification.
FromBitString (<i>string</i> , <i>type</i> , <i>big_endian</i>)	Extracts a number that has been packed in its internal bit format into a String and returns the value of the number.
Instr (<i>start</i> , <i>string_t</i> , <i>string_s</i>)	Searches for an exact match of a substring within a String expression and returns the starting position if found (1-n).
LCase (<i>string</i>)	Returns a String value that has been converted to lower case.
Len (<i>string</i>)	Returns the number of characters in a String .
Mid (<i>string</i> , <i>first</i> , <i>length</i>)	Returns a substring of the <i>string</i> starting at the <i>first</i> character position and consisting of <i>length</i> number of characters.
ToBitString (<i>expression</i> , <i>type</i> , <i>big_endian</i>)	Converts the value of an expression to a specific numeric type and returns the internal bit representation of the number packed into a String value.
UCase (<i>string</i>)	Returns a String value that has been converted to upper case.

8. Assignment Statements

Assignment Statements Overview

The basic value assignment statements have the following form:

```
numeric_variable = arithmetic_expression      '  
Comment  
  
or  
  
string_variable = string_expression          '  
Comment
```

where the *arithmetic_expression* can be arbitrarily complex and can consist of variable values and functions inter-related by the arithmetic operations described in the previous section, and *string_expression* can be a string variable, string function, string valued property, string constant or concatenated string value.

For all arithmetic assignment statements, the result of the statement is always converted to the data type of the *variable* being assigned the new value. For example:

```
Dim a, b As Single, c As Integer  
a = 2.25           ' Assigned floating point value  
b = 3.5           ' Assigned floating point value  
c = a * b         ' Result of 7.875 rounded and  
stored as 8
```

In addition to the standard assignment statements (e.g. $x=2$), assignment operators are provided that perform an operation on a variable value and store the result back into the variable value. For example:

$x *= 3$ is equivalent to $x = x * 3$

[Table 8-1](#) contains the list of assignment operators and their equivalents.

Table 8-1: Operators and Equivalents

Assignment operator	Sample Use	Equivalent Code
<code>^= Operator</code>	<code>x ^= y</code>	<code>x = x ^ y</code>
<code>*= Operator</code>	<code>x *= y</code>	<code>x = x * y</code>
<code>/= Operator</code>	<code>x /= y</code>	<code>x = x / y</code>
<code>\= Operator</code>	<code>x \= y</code>	<code>x = x \ y</code>
<code>+= Operator</code>	<code>x += y</code>	<code>x = x + y</code>
<code>-= Operator</code>	<code>x -= y</code>	<code>x = x - y</code>
<code><<= Operator</code>	<code>x <<= y</code>	<code>x = x << y</code>
<code>>>= Operator</code>	<code>x >>= y</code>	<code>x = x >> y</code>
<code>&= Operator</code>	<code>x &= y</code>	<code>x = x & y</code>

In addition to simplifying and clarifying complex program statements, the use of the assignment operators can be more efficient especially when the variable or property that is being assigned the new value has a complex array index or other specification or long string values are being concatenated. This is due to the fact that the full variable or property specification only has to be evaluated once to obtain the memory address of its value.

9. Control Structures

Control Structures Overview

The statements described in this section alter the sequential execution of instructions within a procedure, i.e. they alter the flow of control. For example, these statements conditionally execute blocks of statements, repeatedly execute blocks of statements a fixed number of times or repeatedly execute blocks of statements until a condition is satisfied.

GoTo Statements

This instruction executes an unconditional branch and continues execution at a specified labeled statement.

```
GoTo label
```

A *label* must either conform to the conventions for a variable name (e.g. label3) or an integer literal (e.g. 1000). To label an instruction, the *label* is placed first on the line followed by a colon (:) followed by any standard instruction.

In general, **GoTo** instructions can make programs more difficult to understand. So, whenever possible, other control structures should be used in place of **GoTo**'s.

If...Then...Else...End If Statements

This control structure tests one or more expressions and conditionally executes at most one block of statements.

```
If condition Then  
    if_statements  
ElseIf elseif_condition Then  
    elseif_statements  
Else  
    else_statements  
End If
```

This control structure first tests the *condition* to determine if it is True (<>0) or False (=0). If True, the *if_statements* are executed and the remainder of the statements down to the End If are skipped. If False, the *if_statements* are skipped and the first Elself or Else, if present, is processed. If an Elself clause is present, its *elseif_condition* is tested and, if True, the associated *elseif_statements* are executed after which execution continues after the End If. Otherwise, the *elseif_statements* are skipped and the next Elself or Else is processed. If all conditional tests fail and an Else is present, the *else_statements* are executed.

An **If...Then** can contain several or no **Elself** clauses. If present, these must be specified before the optional **Else** clause.

An **If...Then** can only contain a single optional **Else** clause.

Since **True** is defined to be <>0, any arithmetic expression that evaluates to <>0 will be interpreted as a **True** condition.

For simple tests, this statement can be reduced to a single line format: **If...Thenstatement**.

For...Next Statements

This control structure executes a sequence of instructions a fixed number of times.

```
For variable = initial_value To final_value Step increment  
    for_loop_statements  
Next variable
```

This control structure begins by setting the *variable* to the *initial_value*. The *variable* can be any numeric type, i.e., **Byte**, **Integer**, **Short**, **Single** or **Double**. Array variables as well as object and structure fields are also permitted. However, object and structure properties are not permitted.

If the *initial_value* does not exceed the *final_value*, the *for_loop_statements* are executed once. However, if the *initial_value* exceeds the *final_value*, the *for_loop_statements* are skipped and execution continues at the statement following the **Next** instruction. If the *for_loop_statements* are executed, execution proceeds until the **Next** instruction is encountered. When the **Next** statement is executed, the *increment* is added to the *variable* and its value is compared again to the *final_value*. So long as the *final_value* is not exceeded, the *for_loop_statements* are executed again and the process is repeated.

The *initial_value*, *final_value*, and *increment* can all be arbitrarily complex arithmetic expressions. However, these expressions are only evaluated when the **For** statement is executed and their values are saved for use by the **Next** statement. Therefore, if the values of these expressions change during the execution of the **For** loop it does not alter the saved values. Since these expressions are only evaluated once, the **For** loop is generally more efficient than other looping methods.

The *increment* value is optional can be positive or negative. If positive, looping terminates when the *variable*'s value is greater than the *final_value*. If negative, looping terminates when the *variable*'s value is less than the *final_value*. If not specified, a value of 1 is assumed.

The **For** loop can be prematurely terminated by executing an **Exit For** statement or a **GoTo** statement that branches outside of the **For** loop.

While...End While Statements

This control structure tests a condition and, if **True**, executes a block of statements repeatedly until the condition is **False**.

```
While test_expression
    while_statements
End While
```

This control structure begins by evaluating the *test_expression*. If the expression value is **True** (<>0), the block of *while_statements* is executed. When the **End While** is encountered, the *test_expression* is evaluated again. If the *test_expression* is still **True**, the *while_statements* are executed again. This sequence is repeated so long as the *test_expression* remains **True**. As soon as the *test_expression* tests **False** (=0), the *while_statements* are skipped and execution continues at the statement following the **End While**.

If the *test_expression* is **False** when the **While** begins execution, the *while_statements* are skipped and are not executed.

The **While** loop can be terminated before the conclusion of the *while_statements* by executing an **Exit While** statement or a **GoTo** statement that branches outside of the **While** loop.

Do...Loop Statements

This control structure bounds a block of instructions that are repeatedly executed so long as a specified expression evaluates to **True** or until the expression value becomes **True**.

```
Do While | Until condition
    statements
Loop
    -or-
Do
    statements
Loop While | Until condition
```

Select...Case...End Select Statements

This control structure executes one of several blocks of statements based upon matching a numeric or **String** expression value. This control structure is similar to the **If...Then...Elseif** statements in

that a series of values are compared to determine the statements that are executed next. However, this control structure is more efficient and convenient than a series of **If** statements if a single value is to be compared to multiple possible values.

```

Select match_value
  Case test_expression, ..., test_expression
    case_statements
  Case Else
    else_statements
End Select

```

The *match_value* is evaluated once and then sequentially tested against each *test_expression* specified in a series of **Case** statements. When a matching *test_expression* value is found, the associated *case_statements* are executed. Following the execution of the appropriate *case_statements*, execution continues at the statement following the **End Select**. If no *test_expression* is matched and a **Case Else** is present, the *else_statements* are executed. If no *test_expression* is matched and a **Case Else** is not defined, none of the *case_statements* are executed and execution continues after the **End Select**.

The *match_value* can be a general numeric or **String** expression and can evaluate to any of the basic arithmetic data types (e.g. integer, real number, byte) or a **String** type.

Any number of **Case** statements can be included. Each **Case** statement can be followed by one or more numeric or **String** *test_expression*'s.

Each **Case** *test_expression* must take one of the following forms:

A general numeric expression, e.g. 2, a+b.

A general **String** expression, e.g. "blue", stg1 & "ab"

If a *test_expression* does not match the data type of the *match_value*, the expression is automatically converted to the appropriate type.

Some example **Case** statements are as follows:

```

Case 1, 3, 5, 7, 11           ' First prime numbers
Case "red", color2, "blue" & "green"

```

Executing an **Exit Select** instruction will skip the remaining statements within a group of *case_statements* or *else_statements*. Execution continues at the instruction following the **End Select**.

Nested Control Structures

In general, control structures can be nested within each other to an arbitrary depth and in arbitrary combinations. For example, a **While** loop can be embedded within another **While** loop or an **If...Then** clause.

10. Procedures, Delegates and Modules

Subroutines and Functions

The language includes user-defined subroutine (**Sub**) and function (**Function**) procedures. Functions are identical to subroutines except that a function returns a value and a call to a function can be included in an arithmetic or string expression. Except as noted in this document, “procedure” or “routine” refer to both user-defined procedures and functions.

Calling a Procedure

A **Function** or **Sub** may be invoked by placing its name as the first item in a statement or by using the **Call** keyword. If a **Function** is invoked in this manner, the returned value of a **Function** is ignored. In addition, a **Function**, but not a **Sub**, may be embedded in an expression whose type is consistent with the type returned by the function.

When invoking either a **Sub** or a **Function**, parentheses must always be provided around the argument list, with empty parenthesis supplied if there are no arguments. In VB6, parentheses are required if a **Call** is used and forbidden if a **Call** is not included. In VB.Net, parentheses are only optional for empty argument lists, although the Visual Studio.Net editor always inserts parentheses.

The following are some valid examples:

```
Call MyProcedure (1, 2, 3) ' ()always required for non-null  
args  
MyProcedure (1, 2, 3) ' Call is optional  
x = 2 * MyFunction (y) ' Do not care about the value  
MyFunction(y)
```

Returning from a Procedure

When a procedure is executed, the procedure exits and returns control to the calling routine when one of the following is encountered:

1. The end of the procedure, marked by an **End Function** or **End Sub** statement.
2. An **Exit Function** or **Exit Sub** statement, depending on the procedure type
3. A **Return** statement.

If the top-level procedure exits, execution of its thread is terminated.

The returned value of a **Function** is specified by either an expression argument to the **Return** statement or by assigning a value to the function name as if it were a variable. For example:

```
Function Test (ByVal x As Double) As Double
    If x < 10 Then
        Return x+1      ' Exits with a value of x+1
    Else
        Test = x+2      ' Sets the return value to x+2
        Exit Function  ' Exits with the current return value
    End If
End Function
```

Procedure Arguments

All arguments (including arrays and objects) can either be passed to a procedure by value (**ByVal**) or by reference (**ByRef**).

For numeric, **Boolean** and **String** types, **ByVal** means that a copy of the value is made for the called procedure. The called procedure may freely modify the argument variable without affecting the value in the calling program. By default, all arguments are passed **ByVal**.

For numeric, **Boolean** and **String** types, **ByRef** means that a pointer to the variable containing the value is passed to the called program. Only variables can be passed by reference. When the called procedure modifies its argument variable, it is actually modifying the value in the calling program.

Passing objects **ByVal** and **ByRef** has some subtle differences. In both cases, accessing and modifying members of the object have the same effect and change the same data. They are different for the case when you assign directly to the procedure argument. In the **ByVal** case, you only change the pointer to the value in the called procedure. In the **ByRef** case, you change the pointer to the value in the calling procedure's object variable.

Not Supported

The language does not support the **GoSub** statement. This statement allowed an arbitrary line within a procedure to act as the start of a procedure embedded within a procedure. Also, the language does not support declaring a procedure as **Static**. A **Static** procedure forced all of the local variables of a procedure to be statically defined such that they retained their values between calls. Variables must be individually specified as being **Static**.

GPL does not support **Optional** procedure arguments, initial argument values, or the **ParamArray** keyword. It also does not support passing a Set or Get Property as a **ByRef** argument.

Delegates

"Delegates" are a means of indirectly calling a function or subroutine procedure through an object variable. You can define a **Delegate** object and then associate a particular function or subroutine procedure to it. The object can be passed between routines like any other object and finally the associated procedure can be called.

Delegates may be used to efficiently call a procedure from a table of procedures, based on a numeric index. They may also be used to pass a call-back procedure to a server process.

The **Delegate** statement creates a new named class that holds a template for the procedure to be called. For example, the statement

```
Delegate Function My_template (ByVal arg1 As Integer) As String
```

creates a class with the name *My_template* that can be used to call **Function** procedures that accept a single **Integer** argument by-value, and return a **String** value. This statement is only a declaration and does not do anything except create the *My_template* class.

Suppose you have two functions:

```
Public Function f0 (ByVal mode As Integer) As String  
:  
End Function  
  
Public Function f1 (ByVal mode As Integer) As String  
:  
End Function
```

You can create an array of **Delegate** objects that refer to these functions, using the template defined earlier in the **Delegate** statement.

```
Dim del_obj(1) As My_template
```

```

del_obj(0) = New My_template(AddressOf f0)
del_obj(1) = New My_template(AddressOf f1)
or
del_obj(0) = New My_template("f0")
del_obj(1) = New My_template("f1")

```

The function type and arguments for the functions f0 and f1 must match the defining **Delegate** statement or a compiler error will be issued for by the **New** statements above.

If you have an *index* variable whose value is either 0 or 1, it can be used to select which of the two functions is executed.

```
str = del_obj(index)(3) ' Call f0 or f1 with mode = 3
```

Delegate Statement

The **Delegate** statement creates a new class that serves as a template for any **Delegate** objects that are associated with it. The **Delegate** statement's procedure type (**Sub** or **Function**), the procedure argument list, and the **Function** result type must match any procedures that are later associated with a **Delegate** object of this class. You need to have a separate **Delegate** statement for each variation of procedure type and argument list. A **Delegate** statement is similar to creating a new class with the name of the **Delegate**. You cannot create a **Delegate** class for a property method.

For example, the statement

```
Delegate Function My_template(ByVal arg1 As Integer) As String
```

creates a class with the name *My_template* that can be used to call **Function** procedures that accept a single **Integer** argument by-value, and return a **String** value.

Creating Delegate Objects

Like other objects, a **Delegate** object must be declared before it can be used. Objects of this type are just like any other object and can be global, inside a class, or local in a procedure. A typical object variable declaration is:

```
Dim del_obj As My_template
```

which creates an object variable *del_obj* that is an instance of the previously declared **Delegate** named *My_template*. Before the object variable can be used, the actual object must be created with a **New** procedure using the name of the procedure as a **String**, or using the **AddressOf** operator. For example:

```
del_obj = New My_template("f0")
or
```



```
del_obj = New My_template(AddressOf f0)
```

The parameter list and procedure type of *f0* must match the template of the **Delegate** statement for *My_template*.

To associate a **Delegate** object with a non-shared class procedure, you need to provide both the procedure name and the object instance to the **AddressOf** operator. You cannot use a **String** in this case. The **Delegate** object saves a pointer to the object instance along with the procedure. For example:

```
Class My_class
:
    Public Function My_fn(ByVal mode As Integer) As String
:
    End Function
End Class

Public Sub Test
    Dim my_obj As New My_class      ' Create an object from My_
class
    Dim del_obj As My_template
    del_obj = New My_template(AddressOf my_obj.My_fn)
    ' At this point, del_obj refers to my_obj.My_fn
    Console.WriteLine(del_obj(3)) ' Call my_obj.My_fn(3)
End Sub
```

AddressOf Operator

The **AddressOf** operator may be used in the constructor (**New** clause) when creating **Delegate** objects. This operator finds the address of a procedure. If the procedure is a non-shared class procedure, it also determines the object to be associated with the call. For example:

```
del_obj = New My_template(AddressOf global_function)
```

Associates *del_obj* with a global function that does not depend on any object.

```
del_obj = New My_template(AddressOf my_object.class_function)
```

Associates *del_obj* with the object referenced by *my_object* and the class member function *class_function*. If *del_obj* is used later to invoke *class_function*, that function is called with the value of *my_object* at the time that *del_obj* was instantiated.

AddressOf vs. String

When the **AddressOf** operator is used in a **New** clause, the compiler finds the name of the procedure during compilation. When a **String** containing the procedure name is used in a **New** clause, the procedure name must be found during execution of the procedure. So **AddressOf** is

more efficient, but the **String** argument is more flexible since a **String** variable can be used to associate different procedures with the same **Delegate** object.

When a **New** clause contains a **String** variable, the procedure name must either be a module-level public procedure, or a top-level class public shared procedure. The **String** variable must have one of the following forms:

- *procedure_name*
- *module_name.procedure_name*
- *class_name.procedure_name*

Modules

A Module is a named section of code that begins with a **Module** statement and ends with an **End Module** statement. Modules may contain variable declarations, procedures, and class definitions. Modules can only appear at the top-level of a file. They cannot appear inside of other modules or classes.

Scope of Items within Modules

Modules provide a simple way to group variables, procedures, and classes, without concern about name conflicts.

Module variables, procedures, and classes can be declared as either **Public** or **Private**. By default these items are all **Private**. A **Private** item may not be referenced outside of the module in which it is declared. A **Public** item may be referenced outside of a module by using the syntax: *module_name.item_name*. As a special case, if *item_name* is unambiguous within all loaded modules, the *module_name* may be omitted.

All variables declared within a module (and not within a class or procedure) are implicitly **Shared**, so they can be referenced within any procedure contained in the module. Consequently, only one copy of each implicitly **Shared** variable value can exist. All references to the variable access the same value. If a variable has any initializer clauses, the initialization occurs once when the main thread for the Module is started. **Const** symbols behave the same as variables, except their values cannot be changed once they are initialized.

Special Initialization Procedures

If a user **Sub** procedure named *Init* is defined within a module, it is executed as part of the module initialization, before the startup procedure begins.

An internal **Sub** procedure named *_Init* is automatically generated to perform module-level initialization. Do not attempt to create a procedure with this name.

11. Exception Handling

Exception Handling Overview

In automated systems, it is typically very important that the equipment be able to run unattended for long periods of time. Since errors and other unexpected events periodically occur, it is critical that the system be able to automatically field execution exceptions, attempt to correct the problem by responding in an appropriate manner, and continue execution if at all possible. In GPL, sections of procedures or entire procedures can be bounded by a **Try...Catch...Finally...End Try** structure that provides a formal means to intercept program exceptions and execute specific corrective actions. When an exception is handled in this manner, information on the type of exception is stored in an **Exception Object**.

Try...Catch...Finally...End Try Statements

In the group of instructions shown below, if an exception of any type occurs when the *try_statements* are executed, rather than halting execution and reporting an error, the system automatically stores the exception information in the *exception_object* and branches execution to the start of the *catch_statements*. The *catch_statements* can test the *exception_object* to determine the nature of the exception and then perform whatever corrective action is necessary. If the *try_statements* complete execution without an error or when the *catch_statements* complete execution after an exception, the *finally_statements* are always executed to perform any required cleanup. At the completion of the *finally_statements*, regular instruction execution continues at the first statement following the **End Try**.

```
Try
    try_statements
Catch exception_object
    catch_statements
Finally
    finally_statements
End Try
```

A **Try** structure must contain either a single **Catch** statement or a single **Finally** statement or one of each type of statement. If a **Catch** statement is specified, it must always include an *exception_object*.

Try structures can be nested within each other. For example, a **Try** structure can be contained within the *catch_statements* of another, higher-level **Try** structure. Also, procedure calls can be contained within any of the statement blocks including the *try_statements*. For example,

```
Public Sub MAIN
    Dim excl As New Exception
    Try
        test()
        Console.WriteLine("Test completed") ' Never gets here
    Catch excl
        Console.WriteLine("Exception!") ' Is executed
    End Try
End Sub

Public Sub test()
    Dim ii As Integer
    ii = 1 / 0 ' Generates exception
    Console.WriteLine("Inside Test") ' Never gets here
End Sub
```

In this sample code, the only output will be "Exception!". This is because the divide by 0 in *test* generates an exception, which terminates execution of *test*. If the call to *test* in the *MAIN* routine was not embedded within a **Try**, the system would normally halt the execution of the thread and report the error. Since the call is within a **Try** block that has a **Catch**, execution is instead continued at the first instruction within the **Catch** block. This feature permits exceptions that occur within arbitrary depths of procedure calls to be fielded by a single **Try** structure.

A **Try** structure with a **Finally** instruction and no **Catch** instruction is only useful in a called procedure when a higher-level calling procedure contains a **Try** structure with a **Catch**. When an exception occurs in the *try_statements* of a called procedure with no **Catch**, the *finally_statements* are executed before the procedure exits to the higher-level procedure that contains the **Catch** statement. In the example above, if the divide by 0 statement was part of a **Try** block that was followed by a **Finally** block, the statements in the **Finally** block would have been executed prior to returning to the *MAIN* routine.

There are special limitations on the use of **GoTo** instructions in connection with **Try** structures. A **GoTo** contained in the *catch_statements* can branch execution into the corresponding *try_statements*. Also, **GoTo**'s can be contained in the *try_statements*, *catch_statements*, and the *finally_statements* so long as the branch is to an instruction within the same block of statements. All other branching into and out of the **Try** statement blocks and the main code is not permitted, e.g. you cannot branch from outside of a **Try** structure into the *try_statements* or out of the *try_statements* into the *finally_statements*. For example,

```
    Dim excl As New Exception
    Try
retry:
        Move.Loc(loc1, profile1)
        Move.WaitForEOM
    Catch excl
        If (excl.ErrorCode = -153) Then
```

```

        profile1.Speed *= .9
        GoTo retry          ' LEGAL BRANCH
    End If
    GoTo bad_jump          ' ILLEGAL!!!
End Try
bad_jump:

```

If an **Exit Try** statement is executed in either the *try_statements* or the *catch_statements*, execution branches and continues at the first statement in the *finally_statements*. **Exit Try** instructions are not permitted in the *finally_statements*.

Throw Statement

The **Throw** statement can be used to force an exception within a program at any time. The syntax for this instruction is as follows:

```
Throw exception_object
```

In addition to forcing an exception to halt program execution, the **Throw** statement is often used within a *catch_statements* block to force an exception to be processed by a higher-level **Try** structure.

Exception Class and Objects

Whenever an exception occurs, the data that defines the specific type of exception is stored and passed in **Exception Objects**. There are two basic types of **Exceptions**: robot **Exceptions** and general **Exceptions**. Both forms have a numeric property that indicates the basic type of error. In addition, the robot **Exceptions** contain information on the robot and axis that is associated with the Exception. The general **Exceptions** contain an error code qualifier in place of the robot and axis information.

As with other types of **Objects**, **Exception Objects** are defined with a **Dim** statement or as an argument to a procedure. When an **Exception Object** is first created, normally the **New** token is used to allocate the data section for the **Object**.

All of the properties and methods for the **Exception Objects** are described in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 11-1](#) summarizes this information.

Table 11-1: Exception Objects, Summary

Member	Type	Description
<code>exception_obj.Axis</code>	Property	Sets and gets a bit mask indicating the robot axes associated with a robot Exception .
<code>exception_obj.Clone</code>	Method	Method that returns a copy of the <code>exception_obj</code> .

Member	Type	Description
<code>exception_obj.ErrorCode</code>	Property	Sets and gets the number of the error message.
<code>exception_obj.Message</code>	Method	Returns the full text string that is generated based upon the <code>exception_obj</code> properties.
<code>exception_obj.Qualifier</code>	Property	Sets and gets the error message qualifier for a general Exception .
<code>exception_obj.RobotError</code>	Property	Sets and gets the Boolean that indicates if an Exception is a robot or general type.
<code>exception_obj.RobotNum</code>	Property	Sets and gets the number of the robot associated with a robot Exception .
<code>exception_obj.UpdateErrorCode</code>	Method	Updates a general (vague) Exception error code with a more specific error code.

12. Motion- and Controller-Related Classes

Motion- and Controller-Related Classes Overview

In the previous sections, the features of GPL that were described closely mimic those that are found in other object orientation variants of the Basic Language. Those features included arithmetic expression representations, control structures, variable types and declarations, mathematical functions, etc.

In the next sections, the features of GPL that have been added specifically to provide built-in motion control facilities are described. Consistent with the philosophy of object-oriented languages, these special features are provided as properties and methods of built-in “**Classes**”. In some cases, the **Classes** are global system classes that simply serve to group features together as an aid in accessing and understanding these facilities. For global **Classes** there is a single copy of the **Class**. The **Math Class** that was described earlier is a good example of a global system class. In other cases, the classes have multiple instances (objects) that allow programs to have multiple copies of the objects, each with their own independent set of values for properties and methods. For example, in a Visual Basic program, the “Textbox” is a good example of the use of objects. An application can have multiple Textboxes each with different colors and sizes and other visual effects. In a motion application, robot locations are represented as objects to allow an application to store multiple robot and object positions, each with its own special properties.

[Table 12-1](#) describes the motion control specific classes that are included in GPL. Each of these classes is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

Table 12-1: Motion Control Classes

Motion Control Class	Description
Signal Class (Global)	Reads and writes digital, analog and other simple means of input and output
Location Class and Objects	Defines positions and orientations of the robot and objects
Profile Class and Objects	Defines sets of parameters that specify the trajectory to be followed when moving between Locations .

Motion Control Class	Description
Move Class (Global)	Provides the basic methods for executing a motion between Locations using Profiles .
RefFrame Class and Objects	Defines robot and part reference frames that can automatically alter the total (absolute) positions and orientations of Locations .
Controller Class (Global)	Provides access to general facilities provided by the motion control hardware such as power control, timers, etc.
Robot Class (Global)	Provides access to the attributes and properties of each robot such as their current position and homing methods.

For many simple pick and place operations, only the first four basic classes need be utilized, i.e. the **Signal, Location, Profile, and Move Classes**. The facilities provided by the more advanced Classes (**RefFrame, Controller, and Robot**) can be brought into play as an individual becomes more familiar with the system or as applications become more complex.

Signal Class

The global **Signal Class** provides access to the hardware features of the Guidance Control System that allow GPL programs to interface to other equipment in the work cell using common, simple techniques. These interfaces include “digital input and output (I/O)” signals and “analog I/O” signals. Digital and analog I/O signals permit GPL programs to coordinate the operation of the robot with other equipment using go/no-go semaphores and to interface to various simple sensors.

These hardware interfaces serve as global resources to all threads and are therefore represented by a global class. To access these interfaces, it is not necessary to create an instance of the class; you can refer to the **Signal Class** directly. For example, to read the value of the first digital I/O signal you could execute the following:

```
Dim signal_state As Boolean
signal_state = Signal.DIO(1)
```

All of the properties and methods for the **Signal Class** are described in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 12-2](#) summarizes this information.

Table 12-2: Signal Class, Summary

Member	Type	Description
Signal.AIO	Property	Sets and gets the values of the analog input and output channels.
Signal.DIO	Property	Sets and gets the values of the digital input and output channels.

Location Class and Objects

The **Location Class** and its instances (**Location Objects** or just **Locations**) are the fundamental means for specifying robot and part positions and orientations in GPL. Each **Location Object** contains data that defines: a position and orientation; special robot configuration information specific to the geometry of the robot to be used; and clearance data that define a safe position by which the **Location** can be approached.

There are two basic types of **Location Objects**: **Cartesian Locations** and **Angles Locations**.

A **Cartesian Location** stores a robot or part position and orientation in Cartesian coordinates. That is, positions and orientations are represented as X, Y, and Z displacements and rotations in a Cartesian coordinate system.

This is a very intuitive representation and has the advantage of representing positions and orientations in a manner that is independent of a robot's geometry. When a **Cartesian Location** is specified as a destination for a robot motion, the system automatically utilizes its built-in knowledge of the robot's geometry (i.e. its kinematics) to convert this Cartesian position into an equivalent set of robot axes positions. Furthermore, if the kinematic model of the robot includes corrections for manufacturing tolerances (e.g. non-perpendicularity of axes, deviations in link lengths), the **Cartesian Locations** will be automatically corrected for these variances.

In addition to containing a position and orientation, a **Cartesian Location** also has an optional pointer to a reference frame object (**RefFrame**). If **RefFrame** is specified, the Cartesian position and orientation is understood to be relative to the reference frame. When such a **Location** is specified as a destination for a robot motion, GPL automatically combines the **Cartesian Location's** position and orientation with the reference frame to compute the absolute coordinates for the robot's destination.

The use of relative coordinates and reference frames is a very powerful technique since it allows related positions and orientations to be moved as a group. For example, all of the IC chips on a PC board or all of the sample tubes in a tray can be defined relative to a reference frame. If the PC board or the tray is misaligned, the position and orientation of the reference frame can be updated and the absolute values of all of the associated **Locations** will automatically be corrected as well.

For even greater flexibility, a reference frame can itself be defined relative to another reference frame.

An **Angles Location** stores a robot position as a set of axes position values. This is the traditional method of representing robot locations and was utilized extensively prior to the introduction of kinematic models. It consists of one axis position value for each degree-of-freedom of the robot.

This method has the benefit of fully and uniquely defining a position of a robot. However, there are several disadvantages of this method relative to the Cartesian representation. For one, if the robot has serial linkages or rotary axes for determining the position of the tool, it is often difficult to intuitively determine how to change the axes positions to effect a desired change in the position or orientation of the robot's tool. Secondly, the use of axes positions makes application programs non-

portable between robots with different geometries or even the same geometry but different sizes. Finally, while this representation is sufficient for describing the position and orientation of a robot, it cannot be easily used to define arbitrary positions and orientations of parts and part relationships within the workspace.

The storage of axes positions has been included for completeness and does have its uses. However, it is recommended that **Cartesian Locations** be applied whenever possible.

In order to distinguish the type of data stored in a **Location**, a “Type” property is provided. This indicates if the object is an **Angles Location** or a **Cartesian Location**. If the **Location** is a Cartesian type, it can also have an optional pointer to a **RefFrame** Object.

For most common operations that require the position and orientation of a **Location Object**, the data of interest is referred to the “total position” or “position” of the **Location**. The “total position” or “position” is synonymous with the following:

For **Cartesian Locations** without a reference frame, the position and orientation stored in the **Location**.

For **Cartesian Locations** with a reference frame, the combination of the position and orientation stored in the **Location** with the position and orientation of its reference frame.

For **Angles Locations**, the stored axes positions.

For some computations, it is convenient to access the Cartesian position and orientation stored in a **Cartesian Location** while ignoring the optional reference frame. To distinguish this value from the “total position”, this data is referred to as the **Location’s** “position with respect to the reference frame” (**PosWrtRef**) whether or not a reference frame is specified. The **PosWrtRef** property is not meaningful for **Angles Locations**.

Throughout GPL, Cartesian positions and orientations are internally stored as a sparse 4 by 4 matrix called a “homogeneous transformation”. This matrix represents the three positional degrees-of-freedom and the three rotational degrees-of-freedom needed to fully specify a robot or part position and orientation in Cartesian coordinates. Homogeneous transforms have several computational advantages and are used to store the “total position” of **Cartesian Locations**, **PosWrtRef** values, reference frames positions and orientations, and during **Cartesian Location** position and orientation computations. However, while this representation has computational benefits, entering the values for the elements of a 4 by 4 homogeneous transformation matrix is not very convenient.

To simplify data entry, transformation values are converted to X, Y, and Z position displacement components and three “Euler angles”. The three Euler angles consist of a rotation about the Z-axis, followed by a rotation about the new Y-axis, followed by a rotation about the new Z-axis. This set of displacements and angles is often referred to as X, Y, Z, Yaw, Pitch, and Roll. In general terms, if you are standing up straight and looking at the horizon, the Yaw angle is the amount that you rotate to look left and right along the horizon. The Pitch angle defines if you subsequently tilt your head to look up into the sky or down into the ground. The Roll angle defines a final rotation of your head

about its new vertical axis. The X, Y, and Z values are in units of millimeters and the Yaw, Pitch, and Roll are in units of degrees.

Since flexible automation must be able to alter a robot's actions in order to accommodate process variations, one of the most important features of the GPL system is the ability to efficiently and easily mathematically manipulate position and orientation data. In the case of **AnglesLocations**, this capability is limited to providing the ability to change individual axes position values. However, for **Cartesian Locations**, a much more powerful mathematics is provided.

As mentioned above, each **Cartesian Location** can have a reference frame or series of reference frames associated with it. These reference frames can not only translate but also rotate the base coordinate system in which the positions are defined. This allows arbitrary 6 degree-of-freedom adjustments to be applied to correct for part and process tolerances and variations.

More generally, GPL includes several methods that can be used to combine the positions and orientations of **Cartesian Locations** and reference frames. Reference frames are a super-set of **Cartesian Locations**. So, in the following paragraphs, the comments concerning **Locations** apply to reference frames as well.

When we combine multiple **Location** positions and orientations, it is easiest to think of **Location Objects** as representing a change in position and orientation with respect to a coordinate system, which in turn defines a new coordinate system. So, if we have a **Location A**, A can be thought of as defining a new coordinate system relative to its base coordinate system. If we combine A with a second **Location B**, the change in position and orientation of B is interpreted with respect to the new coordinate system defined by A. If a third **Location C** is added, the combination of A, B, and C can be computed by interpreting the change in position and orientation of C with respect to the coordinate system generated by combining A and B.

As a specific example, let's consider the simple case without rotations where **Location A** has a X, Y, Z value of (10,25,-40) and **Location B** has a X, Y, Z value of (0,5,0). If we now combined the values, B's incremental displacement of 5 mm along its Y-axis should be interpreted with respect to A's prior translations. The combined result would be (10,30,-40). Now, we can see what happens if we change A so it includes a 90-degree rotation about its Z-axis (10,25,-40,0,0,90). In this case, when we combine the two values, B's base Y-axis has been rotated to point along the negative X-axis of A's base coordinate system. So, the resulting combination would be (5,25,-40,0,0,90).

In addition to combining **Locations**, we can also eliminate the effects of **Locations** by computing the "inverse" of a **Location**. An inverse negates the change in position and orientation of a **Location**. When we combine these negative results with other computations in the proper order, we can unwind **Location** computations.

The Location Class and its Object include not only basic properties, but also extensive methods for mathematically manipulating the positions and orientations contained within these objects. All of these properties and methods are described in detail in the Reference Documentation section and are briefly summarized in [Table 12-3](#).

Table 12-3: Location Class and Object

Member	Type	Description
<i>location_obj</i> .Angle	Property	Sets and gets a single axis position for an Angles Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Angles	Method	Changes all of the axes positions values in an Angles Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Clone	Method	Returns a copy of the <i>location_obj</i> .
<i>location_obj</i> .Config	Property	Sets and gets the bit flags that specify special robot specific location attributes.
<i>location_obj</i> .ConveyorLimit	Method	Returns the distance that a Location , which is defined relative to a conveyor reference frame, is from the operating limits of the conveyor.
Location .Distance	Method	Returns the distance between the XYZ positions of two Cartesian Locations .
<i>location_obj</i> .Here	Method	Modifies the "total position" of the <i>location_obj</i> to be equal to the current location of a robot.
<i>location_obj</i> .Here3	Method	Defines the "total position" of <i>location_obj</i> based upon the XYZ coordinates of three specified locations.
<i>location_obj</i> .Inverse	Method	Returns the inverse of the "total position" of the Cartesian <i>location_obj</i> .
<i>location_obj</i> .Kinesol	Method	Returns a Cartesian Location equivalent to an Angles Location for a specific kinematic model or vice versa.
<i>location_obj</i> .Mul	Method	Returns the result of combining the "total position" of <i>location_obj</i> with the "total position" of another Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Normalize	Method	Corrects the value of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location for any mathematical inconsistencies in the value.
<i>location_obj</i> .Pitch	Property	Sets and gets the Pitch angle of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Pos	Property	Sets and gets the "total position" of the <i>location_obj</i> .
<i>location_obj</i> .PosWrtRef	Property	Sets and gets the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Roll	Property	Sets and gets the Roll angle of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Text	Property	Sets and gets a String value not used by GPL. Available for general use by applications.
<i>location_obj</i> .Type	Property	Sets and gets the Type specification.
<i>location_obj</i> .X	Property	Sets and gets the X position value of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .XYZ	Method	Changes the X, Y, Z, Yaw, Pitch, and Roll values of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .XYZInc	Method	Increments the X, Y, and Z values of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
Location .XYZValue	Method	Returns a Cartesian Location with a "total position" equal to specified X, Y, Z, Yaw, Pitch, and Roll coordinates.
<i>location_obj</i> .Y	Property	Sets and gets the Y position value of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Yaw	Property	Sets and gets the Yaw angle of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .Z	Property	Sets and gets the Z position value of the PosWrtRef of a Cartesian Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .ZClearance	Property	Sets and gets the distance along the Z-axis that defines the safe approach position to the Location .
<i>location_obj</i> .ZWorld	Property	Sets and gets the flag that indicates if the approach distance is measured along the Tool or World Z coordinate axis.

Profile Class and Objects

In order to move the robot in the standard position control mode, a program must specify the destination for the motion and some trajectory parameters. The trajectory parameters include values that specify how fast the robot is to move and what type of path the robot should traverse. As previously described, **Location Objects** are utilized to specify robot and part positions and orientations. In GPL, the trajectory parameters are captured in **Objects** that are instances of the **Profile Class**.

A **Profile Object** defines a motion's peak speed, peak acceleration and deceleration, s-curve profile parameters, type of path (i.e. straight line or interpolated in joint angles), and a constraint specification used to define if the robot should stop at the end of the motion and when the robot is close enough to the final destination to be considered "in position".

While a program can have a unique **Profile Object** for each motion, it is often desirable to create several, generic **Profile Objects** that can be repeatedly used throughout a project for similar types of motions. For example, you might create one **Profile** for retracting the robot, a second **Profile** for moving the robot at high speeds between intermediate (via) points, and a third **Profile** for final positioning of parts. The repeated use of generic profiles often simplifies performance tuning an application.

All of the properties and methods for the **Profile Class** are described in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 12-4](#) summarizes this information.

Table 12-4: Profile Class, Summary

Member	Type	Description
<i>profile_obj</i> .Speed	Property	Sets and gets the peak motion speed specified as a percentage of the nominal speed.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Speed2	Property	Sets and gets the secondary peak motion speed specification as a percentage of their nominal speeds for selected axes during Cartesian motions.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Accel	Property	Sets and gets the peak motion acceleration specified as a percentage of the nominal acceleration.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Decel	Property	Sets and gets the peak motion deceleration specified as a percentage of the nominal deceleration.
<i>profile_obj</i> .AccelRamp	Property	Sets and gets the duration for ramping up to the peak acceleration, specified in seconds.
<i>profile_obj</i> .DecelRamp	Property	Sets and gets the duration for ramping up to the peak deceleration, specified in seconds.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Straight	Property	Sets and gets the Boolean indicating if the robot is to follow a straight-line path.
<i>profile_obj</i> .InRange	Property	Sets and gets the constraint value that specifies if the robot should be stopped at the end of the motion and when the robot is close enough to the final destination to be considered at its final position.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Text	Property	Sets and gets a String value not used by GPL. Available for general use by applications.
<i>profile_obj</i> .Clone	Method	Method that returns a copy of the <i>profile_obj</i> .

Move Class

The global **MoveClass** provides the methods for commanding the robot to perform a motion. The most fundamental position-controlled motion method is:

```
Move.Loc (Location1, Profile1)
```

This executes a single motion segment and moves the robot to the absolute position and orientation specified by *Location1* using the performance parameters specified by *Profile1*. More complex, multi-segment motions can be constructed by executing several **Move** methods in rapid succession. If desired, the system will automatically blend motion segments together into a single “continuous path” that executes several segments in succession before bringing the robot to a stop. This method can significantly improve cycle times of even simple applications. Each motion segment can either move the robot’s tool tip along a Cartesian straight-line path, a circular interpolated path or a joint-interpolated path. Straight-line and circular paths are made possible by the installation of “kinematic modules” that provide GPL with a knowledge of the robot’s geometry.

As an ease-of-use feature, several **Move** methods are provided for defining the destination of a motion. For example, methods are provided for specifying if the robot is to move directly to a destination, move to the clearance position of a destination, move relative to the previous destination, or move a single axis.

In addition to position-controlled motions, the system also supports velocity and torque controlled motions.

In order for a robot motion to be executed, the following conditions must be satisfied:

1. High power for the amplifiers and motors must be enabled (see **Controller.PowerEnabled**).
2. The motors must be commutated. This normally happens automatically and is performed during the **PowerEnable** or the homing sequence.
3. In the standard case where the robot is to be position controlled, the robot axes must be homed each time the controller is restarted (see **Robot.HomeAll**). Homing reestablishes the zero position for each axes so that the robot can repeat a previously taught motion.
4. The robot must be attached to the thread (see **Robot.Attached**). Attaching ensures that only a single thread can issue motion commands to a robot.

For general information on the system’s motion control capabilities, please see the introductory section on “Motion Control”.

All of the methods for the **Move Class** are described in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 12-5](#) summarizes this information.

Table 12-5: Move Class, Summary

Member	Type	Description
Move.Approach	Method	Moves to the clearance position for a specified Location .
Move.Arc	Method	Moves the tool tip of the robot along an arc path defined by three Locations .
Move.Circle	Method	Moves the tool tip of the robot around a complete circle defined by three Locations .
Move.Delay	Method	Pauses execution of motions for a specified period of time, in seconds.
Move.Extra	Method	Moves extra, independent axes during the next motion to a Cartesian Location .
Move.ForceOverlap	Method	Bypasses the system's normal motion blending features and defines how the execution of two sequential motions are to be overlapped. Can also automatically limit the rounding of corners between sequential Cartesian motions.
Move.Loc	Method	Basic instruction to move to a specified destination Location .
Move.OneAxis	Method	Convenience method to move a single axis of a robot.
Move.Rel	Method	Moves to a Location that is relative to the destination of the previous motion.
Move.SetJogCommand	Method	Sets or changes the specific mode, axis and speed during jog (manual) control mode.
Move.SetRealTimeMod	Method	Sets the changes in position and orientation for the Real-time Trajectory Modification mode.
Move.SetSpeeds	Method	Sets new target speeds and accelerations for all axes during velocity control mode.
Move.SetTorques	Method	Sets new target torque output levels for all motors in torque control mode.
Move.StartJogMode	Method	Initiates execution of jog (manual) control mode.
Move.StartRealTimeMod	Method	Initiates a trajectory mode that permits a GPL program to dynamically modify a planned path while the path is being executed.
Move.StartSpeedDAC	Method	Starts / stops automatic control of an analog output based upon a robot's tool tip speed.
Move.StartTorqueCntrl	Method	Initiates execution of torque control mode for one or more motors.
Move.StartVelocityCntrl	Method	Switches all axes of a robot to velocity control mode in place of position control mode.
Move.StopSpecialModes	Method	Terminates execution of any active special trajectory control modes.
Move.Trigger	Method	Primes the system to automatically assert a digital output signal or a thread event at a prescribed trigger position during the next or current motion.
Move.WaitForEOM	Method	Pauses GPL program execution until the current motion is completed.

RefFrame Class and Objects

The **Objects** of the **RefFrame Class** define robot and part reference frames. As previously described, one or more **Cartesian Locations** can be defined relative to a **RefFrame**. If the position or orientation of the **RefFrame** is subsequently modified, the absolute (or “total”) position and orientation of all associated **Cartesian Locations** are automatically adjusted and will move with the reference frame.

For example, a **RefFrame Object**, *tray_ref*, can be created that defines the position and orientation of a tray of parts. The **Location** of each part on the tray can then be defined with respect to *tray_ref*. If the tray and its parts move in unison, the position and orientation of *tray_ref* can be updated and the total position of all of the part **Locations** will be automatically adjusted and move with the reference frame.

In addition to defining a **Location** with respect to a **RefFrame**, a **RefFrame** can be defined with respect to another **RefFrame**. In the example above, if an array of trays is organized into a two dimensional grid, a second “pallet” **RefFrame**, *pallet_ref*, can be defined to represent the grid of trays. *tray_ref* can then be defined with respect to *pallet_ref*. Each time the *pallet_ref* is advanced to the next tray, the *tray_ref* position will be modified as well as all of the part **Locations** that are defined with respect to *tray_ref*.

To define a **Location** with respect to a reference frame, you simply refer to the reference frame via the **RefFrame** property of a **Cartesian Location**. For example,

```
Dim part1 As New Location ' part1 defaults to Cartesian Loc
Dim tray_ref As New RefFrame
part1.RefFrame = tray_ref ' part1 defined wrt tray_ref
```

To simplify the use of reference frames, several different types of **RefFrames** exist and more will be added in the future. The common members of all **RefFrame Objects** are summarized in [Table 12-8](#). For detailed information on these members and those of the specific types of reference frames, please consult the [GPL Dictionary Pages](#).

Table 12-6: RefFrame Objects

Member	Type	Description
<i>refframe_obj.Type</i>	Property	Sets and gets the type of the reference frame.
<i>refframe_obj.Loc</i>	Property	Sets and gets the Location Object that is an integral part of the reference frame. The use of Loc varies for different types of reference frames although Loc.RefFrame always defines the next reference frame if <i>RefFrame_obj</i> is itself relative to another reference frame.
<i>refframe_obj.Pos</i>	Method	Returns the absolute (“total”) position and orientation for any type of reference frame object.
<i>refframe_obj.PosWrtRef</i>	Method	Returns the position for any type of reference frame while ignoring any further reference frames.
<i>refframe_obj.Text</i>	Property	Sets and gets a String value not used by GPL. Available for general use by applications.

Basic Reference Frame

The basic type of **RefFrame** simply stores the position and orientation of the reference frame in the **Loc Location**. The **Loc.Pos** property defines the position and orientation of the reference frame.

The GPL project is responsible for defining and updating the **Loc.Pos** value to reflect the current reference frame value.

```
Dim loc1 As New Location      ' loc1 set to Cartesian Loc
Dim refl As New RefFrame
loc1.RefFrame = refl         ' loc1 with respect to refl
refl.Loc.XYZ(10,20,30,0,180,20) ' Set refl Pos
```

In order to define a basic reference frame with respect to another reference frame, the **Loc.RefFrame** value must reference the next reference frame.

For a basic reference frame, it is possible to use **Loc.Pos** and **Loc.PosWrtRef** to read the total position and relative position of the reference frame. However, it is generally a better practice to read the **Pos** and **PosWrtRef** of the **RefFrame** instead. *RefFrame_obj.Pos* and *RefFrame_obj.PosWrtRef* will return the current values for any type of **RefFrame**.

The **RefFrame** members that have special meaning for the basic type of reference frame are briefly described in [Table 12-7](#).

Table 12-7: RefFrame, Special Meaning for Basic Reference Frame Type

Member	Type	Description
<i>refframe_obj.Type</i>	Property	Set to 0 to indicate a basic reference frame.
<i>refframe_obj.Loc</i>	Property	Loc.Pos is set equal to the position and orientation of the reference frame by a GPL procedure.

Pallet Reference Frame

A pallet reference frame defines a one, two, or three-dimensional rectangular grid of positions that are sequentially indexed. For example, this type of reference frame can be utilized to represent a row of parts being fed, an array of test samples organized into a two dimensional grid or a three dimension pallet of shipping boxes. Once a pallet **RefFrame** has been defined, you can advance to the next position in the pallet by simply invoking the pallet’s **PalletNextPos** method.

The position of the first item (i.e. index 1,1,1) is defined by the **X**, **Y**, and **Z** displacements of **Loc**. The directions of the X, Y, and Z axes of **Loc** define the direction for each row, column, and layer of the pallet, respectively.

The distance between each item in a row, column, or layer is defined by the **PalletPitch** in each dimension. The maximum number of elements in each row, column, or layer can also be specified. Setting the maximum index to 1 indicates that this corresponding dimension is not incremented.

The order in which GPL indexes along rows, columns, and layers can also be specified. For example, when **PalletNextPos** is executed, the default is to step along the row first, then along

columns, and finally to the next layer. However, you can change the order to any combination. So, you could step by layers first, rows second, and then columns if you so choose.

In addition to using **PalletNextPos** to increment to the next pallet element, the pallet element can be directly specified by the **PalletIndex** property or the **PalletRowColLay** method. When a pallet indexes beyond the final element, it automatically wraps back to the first element.

The **RefFrame** members that have special meaning for the pallet type of reference frame are described in [Table 12-8](#).

Table 12-8: Special Meaning for Pallet Type of Reference Frame

Member	Type	Description
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.Type</i>	Property	Set to 1 to indicate a pallet reference frame.
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.Loc</i>	Property	Loc.X , Y , and Z define the position of the first row, column and layer. The orientation of the X, Y, and Z axes of Loc define the direction for each row, column, and layer respectively.
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletIndex</i>	Property	Sets and gets the index for the next position along the pallet row, column, or layer (1 to n).
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletMaxIndex</i>	Property	Sets and gets the maximum position index along the pallet row, column, or layer (1 to n).
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletNextPos</i>	Method	Advances to the next pallet position.
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletOrder</i>	Property	Sets and gets the parameter that specifies the order in which PalletNextPos indexes along the row, column, and layer indices.
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletPitch</i>	Property	Sets and gets the step size for advancing along each row, column, or layer.
<i>reframe_</i> <i>obj.PalletRowColLay</i>	Method	Sets the next pallet position row, column, and layer indices in a single instruction.

Conveyor Reference Frame

Conveyor Tracking is a software option that permits **Locations** to be defined relative to a conveyor belt. When the robot moves to such positions, the system automatically adjusts the robot's motions to account for the actual position and speed of the belt. For example, this option allows an application that picks parts from one conveyor and places them on a second conveyor to be taught when the conveyors are stationary. Then, during the actual execution, the program will be automatically adjusted by the system to perform the same operation even when the conveyors are moving.

From a programming point of view, conveyor reference frames provide the means for implementing a conveyor tracking program. For each conveyor belt, one or more conveyor **RefFrame** objects

must be defined. Each such object specifies the conveyor that is being referenced and provides the data need by the system to evaluate the instantaneous position of the belt.

The **Pos** value of a conveyor reference frame always yields the instantaneous position of a conveyor and its X-axis always points along the nominal direction of travel of the belt. Any **Location** that is defined with respect to a conveyor **RefFrame** automatically moves with the conveyor belt.

The **RefFrame** members that are defined for a conveyor reference frame are described in [Table 12-9](#). For more information on the Conveyor Tracking option, please see the **Controller Software > Introduction to the Software > Motion Control > Conveyor Tracking** section of the *PreciseFlex Library*.

Table 12-9: Conveyor Type of Reference Frame

Member	Type	Description
<i>refframe_</i> <i>obj.Type</i>	Property	Set to 2 to indicate a conveyor reference frame.
<i>refframe_obj.Loc</i>	Property	Not used. Conveyor reference frames cannot be defined with respect to any other reference frame.
<i>refframe_</i> <i>obj.PosWrtRef</i>	Method	Returns the position of the "nominal" transformation for the associated conveyor robot.
<i>refframe_</i> <i>obj.</i> ConveyorOffset	Property	Sets or gets the property that specifies the zero position of the conveyor belt's encoder.
<i>refframe_</i> <i>obj.</i> ConveyorRobot	Property	Sets or gets the property that specifies the robot module that is interfaced to the belt encoder and contains the data that defines the conveyor.

Controller Class

The global **ControllerClass** provides a means for GPL programs to access a number of system wide features and facilities of the Guidance Controller System, e.g. High Power control, E-Stop logic, Configuration Database values, etc. These capabilities are represented as properties and methods of the **Controller Class**. Since this class is global, it does not have any properties or fields that have values that are local to a specific routine or program scope. So, the **ControllerClass** can be referenced directly without the need for creating instances of **ControllerObjects**. For example, to enable high power to the amplifiers for non-Category 3 (CAT-3) safe systems, the following GPL statement could be used:

```
Controller.PowerEnabled = True
```

In this instruction, "**Controller**" refers to the global **ControllerClass** and "**EnablePower**" is a property of this class. Likewise, if we wish to test if high power is currently enabled, the following instructions could be utilized:

```

If (Controller.PowerEnabled) Then
    :
End If
    
```

Of special interest are the **SystemMessage**, **ShowDialog** and **ShowDialogMCP** methods of this class. These methods allow GPL programs to easily output information to the operator and prompt for simple responses. For the first two methods, the output and input appear on the web page that displays the Operator Control Panel. For the third method, the output and input are performed via the PreciseFlex™ Hardware Manual Control Pendant. In the following example, text is output to the system message log displayed on the Operator Control Panel and then displays a pop-up to prompt for a "Yes" or "No" answer.

```

Dim button As Integer
Controller.SystemMessage("Sample output to Operator Control
Panel")
Controller.ShowDialog("Yes,No","Do you like this pop-up?", but-
ton)
Controller.SystemMessage("Operator pressed button " & CStr(but-
ton))
    
```

All of the properties and methods for the **ControllerClass** are discussed in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 12-10](#) summarizes the members of the class.

Table 12-10: ControllerClass, Summary

Member	Type	Description
Controller.Command	Method	Executes a console command and returns any output as a String value.
Controller.ErrorLog	Property	Returns an entry from the system Error Log as a String value or clears the Error Log.
Controller.Load	Method	Loads a GPL project into memory and compiles it in preparation for execution.
Controller.PDb	Property	Sets and gets any accessible value in the configuration parameter database.
Controller.PDbNum	Property	Optimized means to set and get numeric values in the configuration parameter database.
Controller.PowerEnabled	Property	Sends a request to either turn on or off high (motor) power to the amplifier. Returns whether high power is on or off.
Controller.PowerState	Property	Returns the current state of the high power sequence.
Controller.RecordButton	Property	Sets and gets the latched Boolean value that indicates if the hardware MCP RECORD button has been pressed.
Controller.ShowDialog	Method	Displays a pop-up dialog box on the web Operator Control Panel.
Controller.ShowDialogMCP	Method	Displays a pop-up dialog box on the LCD display of the PreciseFlex™ Hardware Manual Control Pendant.
Controller.SleepTick	Method	Delays further execution of a thread for a specified number of Trajectory Generator periods.
Controller.SoftEStop	Property	Sets and gets the Boolean flag that triggers a Soft E-Stop.

Member	Type	Description
Controller.SystemMessage	Method	Enters a message into the GPL system message log that is displayed on the web Operator Control Panel.
Controller.SystemSpeed	Property	Sets and gets the property that can reduce the speed of all robot motions.
Controller.Tick	Property	Returns the execution repetition period for the Trajectory Generator.
Controller.Timer	Property	Returns the value of the controller's microsecond clock in units of seconds.
Controller.Unload	Method	Unloads an idle GPL project from memory.

Robot Class

The global **Robot Class** provides a means for GPL programs to access functions and properties specific to each robot configured in the system. The **Robot** is provided as a global class to simplify its access since many systems have only a single robot and many applications are written to access and control the robot from a single thread. Since this class is global, it does not have any properties or fields that have values that are local to a specific routine or program scope. So, the **Robot Class** can be referenced directly without the need for creating instances of **Robot Objects**.

The **Robot Class** provides properties and methods for reading the current position of a robot, initiating a homing sequence from a program, forcing a rapid deceleration of any in-process motion, retrieving data from the trajectory generator for the robot, setting and getting the robot's base and tool offsets, etc.

The most important operations of the **Robot Class** are to associate a specific robot with a specific thread and to give exclusive control of a robot to a thread. Most read-only robot operations require that a statement either explicitly specify a robot or have a previously **Selected** robot. For example, to read the current position of a robot, the **Selected** robot will be accessed if no robot is specified. On the other hand, in order to control or move a robot, a thread must first be **Attached** to a robot in order to gain exclusive access to it. Typically, if a project is intended to control a robot, the GPL software development environment can be configured to automatically generate the statements to ensure the robot will be **Attached** at the start of program execution and un-**Attached** when the program is terminated or pauses execution.

All of the properties and methods for the **Robot Class** are discussed in detail in the Reference Documentation section. [Table 12-11](#) summarizes the members of the class.

Table 12-11: Robot Class, Summary

Member	Type	Description
Robot.Attached	Property	Sets and gets the number of the robot that is exclusively controlled by a thread.
Robot.Base	Property	Sets and gets the position and orientation offset for the base of the robot.
Robot.CartMode	Property	Gets an Integer that contains flag bits that indicate if any special Cartesian trajectory modes are active.
Robot.Custom	Property	Sets and gets elements of a parameter array whose interpretation is specific to each kinematic module.

Member	Type	Description
Robot.DefLinComp	Method	Defines internal table of motor encoder "Linearity compensation" correction values that are automatically applied to encoder values.
Robot.Dest	Property	Gets the Cartesian Location that is the final destination for the previously executed motion.
Robot.DestAngles	Property	Gets the Angles Location that is the final destination for the previously execution motion.
Robot.Home	Method	Homes the Attached robot to establish the reference positions for each axes.
Robot.HomeAll	Method	Homes all robots to establish the reference positions for each of their axes.
Robot.JointToMotor	Method	Converts an array of axis joint angles (in degrees or millimeters) to an equivalent array of motor positions (in encoder counts).
Robot.LastProfile	Property	Returns a Profile Object whose properties are equal to those of the currently executing motion or the last executed motion if no motion is active.
Robot.MotorTempStatus	Property	Returns a code that indicates the temperature status of a motor.
Robot.MotorToJoint	Method	Converts an array of motor positions (in encoder counts) to an equivalent array of axis joint angles (in degrees or millimeters).
Robot.Payload	Property	Asserts or retrieves the last asserted value that specifies the mass of the payload being carried by the robot.
Robot.RapidDecel	Property	Sets the Boolean flag that forces any in-process motion for a robot to be rapidly decelerated to a stop.
Robot.RealTimeModAcm	Property	Returns a Cartesian Location whose value is equal to the accumulated modifications generated by the Real-time Trajectory Modification mode.
Robot.RestartBase	Property	Gets the position and orientation offset for the base of the robot that was set when the controller was restarted.
Robot.RestartTool	Property	Gets the position and orientation offset for the tool or gripper of the robot that was set when the controller was restarted.
Robot.Selected	Property	Sets and gets the number of the robot that will be accessed for read-only operations by default.
Robot.Source	Property	Returns a Cartesian Location whose value is equal to the initial position and orientation of the previously executed motion.
Robot.SourceAngles	Property	Returns an Angles Location whose value is equal to the initial axes positions of the previously executed motion.
Robot.SpeedAngles	Property	Returns an Angles Location whose components contain the instantaneous speed of each axis.
Robot.Tool	Property	Sets and gets the position and orientation offset for the tool or gripper of the robot.
Robot.TrajState	Property	Gets the Integer that indicates the current state of the trajectory generator for a given robot.
Robot.Where	Property	Gets a Cartesian Location whose value indicates the current position and orientation of a robot.
Robot.WhereAngles	Property	Gets an Angles Location whose value indicates the current position of each axes of a robot.

Latch Class

The global **Latch Class** provides a means for GPL procedures to receive the results of latches generated by digital input signals configured to trigger latching. These latch results allow a robot or belt position to be captured with high accuracy when a digital input value changes.

The **Latch Class** defines **Latch Objects** that contain the time when the latch occurred and the robot axis positions at that time. This class includes methods and properties for accessing the queue of latch results, and for accessing the data in the results themselves.

Each robot has a single independent queue of latch result objects, generated when a configured latch signal changes state. The queue is kept in order of time, with the oldest events first. Conveyor belts are a special case of robots, normally configured as "encoder only" robots. Multiple belts or robots may be latched independently.

For a general discussion of Latches, please see the **Controller Software > Introduction To The Software > Communications > Digital Inputs and Outputs > Latch Inputs** section of the *PreciseFlex Library*.

The methods for this class are summarized in [Table 12-12](#):

Table 12-12: Latch Class, Methods

Member	Type	Description
<i>latch_object</i> . Angle	Property	Returns the latched value of the specified axis angle. Avoids creating a Location object.
Latch.Count	Shared Property	Returns the number of latch results pending for a robot or conveyor belt.
<i>latch_object</i> . ErrorCode	Property	Returns the error code from a latch object. 0 means no error.
Latch.Flush	Shared Method	Flushes all latch results pending for a robot or conveyor belt.
<i>latch_object</i> . Location	Method	Returns a Location object containing the latched position, as a Cartesian value or a set of angles.
<i>latch_object</i> . RawTime	Property	(Hidden Property) Returns the hardware time register value when the latch occurred as a Double value. Used for testing.
Latch.Result	Shared Method	Removes the next latch result from the queue for a robot or belt and returns it as a Latch object. Returns Nothing if the queue is empty. Throws an exception if a result was lost due to an overflow.
<i>latch_object</i> . Signal	Property	Returns the number of the digital input signal that generated the latch.
Latch.ThreadEvent	Shared Property	Associates a thread event with a robot or belt. The thread event gets set if the latch queue contains latch results or when new latch results are added.
<i>latch_object</i> . Timestamp	Property	Returns the timestamp when the latch occurred as a Double value, consistent with the Controller.Timer property.

13. Networking Communications

Networking Communications Overview

The following pages explain how to communicate across the Ethernet network using GPL. They provide a summary of the classes involved and examples of how to use them. For additional details on specific methods and properties, see the GPL Dictionary.

GPL includes a number of built-in classes to allow network communications between GPL and other systems using TCP or UDP. They are similar to classes found in Visual Basic, and use concepts from Unix and Linux network stacks. These pages are not intended to be a complete tutorial on network communications, but should provide sufficient information for simple applications.

Networking Definitions and Classes

Table 13-1 summarizes the terms and abbreviations used by the network software and this documentation:

Table 13-1: Concept Definitions

Concept	Description
Client	A TCP or UDP Endpoint. A TCP Client connects to a Server and then issues requests to that Server. Normally a TCP Client does not receive data except in response to a request. A UDP Client sends to and receives from other UDP clients.
Datagram	A unit of data that includes source and destination Endpoint information.
Endpoint	The source or destination for a datagram normally specified as an IP Address and Port.
IP	Internet Protocol - A low-level datagram protocol that is the basis for both TCP and UDP.
IP Address	A 32-bit number that identifies a particular network and computer on that network. Normally written as four decimal numbers, each of which range from 0 to 255, separated by periods. For example: 192.168.0.1
Port	A number from 0 to 65536 that identifies a process or protocol on a networked computer. Some ports are pre-assigned to particular protocols. For example, port 21 is normally used by a FTP server.

Concept	Description
Server	A TCP Endpoint that accepts connections from a Client and services requests from a Client. Normally a Server does not initiate I/O but simply responds to requests. A UDP-based server uses the same methods as a client since there is no connection established.
Socket	An Object that holds connection information for network I/O. Various methods associate Endpoints with Sockets.
TCP	Transmission Control Protocol - A connection-based protocol that sends reliable Datagrams between Client and Server Endpoints. Messages are guaranteed to be delivered in order.
UDP	User Datagram Protocol – A connection-less protocol that sends Datagrams between two endpoints, without any guarantee of delivery or ordering. UDP is generally faster than TCP, but not as reliable.

GPL supports TCP Server and Client connections, as well as sending or receiving UDP datagrams. [Table 13-2](#) summarizes the classes for network I/O.

Table 13-2: Networking Class Definitions

Networking Class	Description
IPEndPoint	Objects of this class describe IP Endpoints.
Socket	Objects of this class correspond to local network Endpoints. Most network I/O operations are methods of the Socket class.
TcpClient	Objects of this class correspond to TCP Clients that can request connections to a TCP Server.
TcpListener	Objects of this class correspond to TCP Servers that can accept connection requests from TCP clients.
UdpClient	Objects of this class correspond to UDP Endpoints. They can exchange UDP Datagrams with other UDP Endpoints.

[Table 13-3](#) through [Table 13-7](#) summarize the methods and properties for each of the classes. Each of these properties and methods is described in detail in the GPL Dictionary contained in the Software Reference section of the *PreciseFlex Library*.

Table 13-3: IPEndPoint Member Definitions

IPEndPoint Member	Type	Description
New IPEndPoint	Constructor Method	Creates an Endpoint and allows the IP Address and Port to be specified.
<i>ipendpoint_obj</i> .IPAddress	Property	Sets or gets the IP Address of an Endpoint.
<i>ipendpoint_obj</i> .Port	Property	Sets or gets the Port of an Endpoint.

Table 13-4: Socket Member Definitions

Socket Member	Type	Description
<i>socket_obj</i> .Available	Property	Gets the number of data bytes currently available to receive from a Socket .
<i>socket_obj</i> .Blocking	Property	Sets or gets the blocking mode for a Socket . If True , the Socket blocks. If False , it does not block.
<i>socket_obj</i> .Close	Method	Closes any connections associated with a Socket .
<i>socket_obj</i> .Connect	Method	Requests a TCP Client connection with a remote TCP Server.
<i>socket_obj</i> .KeepAlive	Property	Sets or gets the flag that controls whether a keep-alive message is automatically transmitted over the current TCP connection.
<i>socket_obj</i> .Receive	Method	Receives a datagram from an open TCP connection.
<i>socket_obj</i> .ReceiveFrom	Method	Receives a datagram from an open UDP connection.
<i>socket_obj</i> .ReceiveTimeout	Property	Sets or gets the receive timeout, in milliseconds, for a Socket .
<i>socket_obj</i> .RemoteEndPoint	Property	Gets information about the remote end point of a TCP connection.
<i>socket_obj</i> .Send	Method	Sends a datagram on an open TCP connection.
<i>socket_obj</i> .SendTimeout	Property	Sets or gets the send timeout, in milliseconds, for a Socket .
<i>socket_obj</i> .SendTo	Method	Sends a datagram to an open UDP connection.

Table 13-5: TcpClient Member Definitions

TcpClient Member	Type	Description
New TcpClient	Constructor Method	Creates an Object for a TCP Client and optionally requests a connection.
<i>tcpclient_obj</i> .Client	Method	Returns the embedded Socket for performing I/O.
<i>tcpclient_obj</i> .Close	Method	Closes a Client Socket and breaks any connection.

Table 13-6: TcpListener Member Definitions

TcpListener Member	Type	Description
New TcpListener	Constructor Method	Creates an Object for a TCP Server to listen for connections.
<i>tcplistener_obj</i> .AcceptSocket	Method	Accepts a connection and returns a new Socket Object for use by the TCP Server.

TcpListener Member	Type	Description
<i>tcpListener_obj</i> .Close	Method	Stops listening and closes the listener Socket .
<i>tcpListener_obj</i> .Pending	Property	True if there is a pending connection and AcceptSocket will succeed. Otherwise False .
<i>tcpListener_obj</i> .Start	Method	Starts listening for connection requests.
<i>tcpListener_obj</i> .Stop	Method	Stops listening and closes the listener Socket . Same as Close method.

Table 13-7: UdpClient Definitions

UdpClient Member	Type	Description
New UdpClient	Constructor Method	Creates an Object for I/O using UDP.
<i>udpclient_obj</i> .Client	Method	Returns the embedded Socket for performing I/O.
<i>udpclient_obj</i> .Close	Method	Closes a Socket .

All network-related I/O is performed using **Socket Objects**. **TcpClient**, **TcpListener**, and **UdpClient Objects** contain internal **Socket Objects** that are created by their constructors or methods. These **Socket Objects** are returned by the methods *tcpclient_obj*.Client, *tcpListener_obj*.AcceptSocket, and *udpclient_obj*.Client. It is not useful to create a **Socket** object using **New**.

TCP Server

A TCP server is a process that listens for connection requests and sets up connections with remote TCP clients. The remote clients send requests to the server on the connection and receive responses. When the connection is no longer needed, it is closed. Follow this procedure to set up a TCP server:

Step	Action
1.	Create an IPEndPoint Object for the local endpoint. This Object should leave the IP Address blank, allowing any remote node to connect, but set the port to a specific number that the remote client knows.
2.	Create a TcpListener Object using this IPEndPoint Object , and start listening for a connection request by calling the <i>tcpListener_obj</i> .Start method.

Step	Action
3.	Optionally poll for a connection request using the <i>tcpListener_object</i> . Pending property.
4.	Accept the connection request and obtain a new Socket Object by calling the <i>tcpListener_object</i> . AcceptSocket method. If no other connections are to be serviced, stop listening for connections by calling the <i>tcpListener_object</i> . Stop method.
5.	Use <i>socket_object</i> . Receive and <i>socket_object</i> . Send to perform I/O with the remote client.
6.	When finished with the connection, call <i>socket_object</i> . Close to close it.

TCP Server Example

In this example, a simple TCP server is created to listen for connections on port 1234. A client may connect from anywhere. The server simply echoes back whatever the client sends. You can use a standard Telnet application to communicate with this server.

The **IPEndPoint Object** for the remote TCP client is set to IP address "", port 1234, indicating it will connect with any IP address using that port. A **TcpListener Object**, *tl*, is created that listens for connections to that endpoint. The **Pending** method is used to poll for a connection request. When a request arrives, the **AcceptSocket** method returns a new **Socket Objects** that is used for receiving messages and sending replies.

```

Public Sub Telnet
    ' Simple Telnet-like TCP server, listening on port 1234
    ' Echoes back whatever it receives
    Dim ep As New IPEndPoint("", 1234) ' Accept from any IP
    Dim tl As New TcpListener(ep)
    Dim ts As Socket
    Dim recv As String
    Dim send As String
    Dim ii As Integer

    ' Start listening and wait for a connection

    tl.Start()
    While Not tl.Pending()
        Thread.Sleep(5000)
    End While
    Console.WriteLine("Connection request...")
    ts = tl.AcceptSocket()           ' Get the socket
    tl.Stop()                       ' Only service one

    ' Read from client and echo back messages

    While True
        ii = ts.Receive(recv, 1000)
        Console.WriteLine("Receive count: " & CStr(ii))
        If ii = 0 Then
            Exit While
        End If
    End While
End Sub

```

```

        End If
        send = "Received: " & recv
        ts.Send(send)
    End While
    Console.WriteLine("Connection closed")
    ts.Close()
End Sub

```

TCP Client

A TCP client is a process that establishes a connection with a remote TCP server, sends requests to it, and receives replies. When the connection is no longer needed, it is closed. Follow this procedure to set up a TCP client :

Step	Action
1.	Create an IPEndPoint Object for the remote server endpoint. This Object should specify the IP address of the remote server and the port number on which the server is listening.
2.	Create a TcpClient Object using this <i>endpoint_object</i> . Alternately you can create a TcpClient Object omitting the <i>endpoint_object</i> , and later call <i>socket_object.Connect</i> method to establish the connection.
3.	Obtain the Socket Object for this connection by calling the <i>tcpclient_object.Client</i> method.
4.	Use <i>socket_object.Send</i> and <i>socket_object.Receive</i> to perform I/O with the remote client.
5.	When finished with the connection, call <i>socket_object.Close</i> to close it.

TCP Client Example

This example shows how to write a TCP client that connects to a TCP server.

The **IPEndPoint Object** *ep* for the remote TCP server is set to IP address 192.168.0.2, port 1234. A **TcpClient Object**, *tc* is created that connects to that endpoint. The **Socket** *ts* is obtained from *tc* and is used for sending messages and receiving replies.

```

Public Sub Tcp_client
    ' Connect to a remote TCP server at
    ' IP address 192.168.0.2, Port 1234

    Dim ep As New IPEndPoint("192.168.0.2", 1234)
    Dim tc As New TcpClient(ep)
    Dim ts As Socket
    Dim message As String
    Dim reply As String
    Dim ii As Integer

```

```

ts = tc.Client
message = "Test message" & Chr(GPL_CR) & Chr(GPL_LF)
ts.Send(message)
ts.Receive(reply, 1000)
Console.WriteLine("Reply: " & reply)

For ii = 1 To 100
    ts.Send(message)
    ts.Receive(reply, 1000)
Next ii
Console.WriteLine("Test complete")

ts.Close
End Sub

```

UDP Server and Client

A UDP Server and UDP client are very similar since there is no explicit connection between the two endpoints. The difference is in how the endpoints are determined. The remote and local endpoints are free to send or receive messages to or from any network address or port. To set up a UDP server or client, follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	Create an IPEndPoint Object for the local IP address and port. Normally the IP address can be left blank. The port may be left as zero if incoming datagrams to any port should be matched, or non-zero to match only datagrams to a specific port.
2.	Create a UdpClient Object using this local IPEndPoint Object .
3.	Obtain the Socket Object by calling the <i>udpclient_object</i> . Client method.
4.	If you are initiating a request, create another IPEndPoint Object that contains the IP address and port of the remote destination. Use this remote IPEndPoint Object with the <i>socket_object</i> . SendTo method to send the datagram.
5.	If you are expecting to receive a request, create an IPEndPoint Object and pass it ByRef when calling the <i>socket_object</i> . ReceiveFrom method. The IP address and port of the remote endpoint is automatically stored in this IPEndPoint Object . You can then use the same IPEndPoint Object in a <i>socket_object</i> . SendTo method call to respond to the endpoint that made the request.

UDP Client Example - Read File using TFTP

In this example, a UDP client is created to read a file from a TFTP server. TFTP is a standard UDP-based file server found on many computers.

The **IPEndPoint Object** *srv_ep* for the remote UDP client is set to IP address "192.168.0.2", and the TFTP port 69. A **UdpClient Object**, *uc*, is created and the **Socket Object** associated with *uc* is stored in *us*. The remainder of the I/O is performed with this **Socket Object**.

A TFTP "file open" message is built in string *out* and sent to the remote UDP endpoint contained in *srv_ep* using the **SendTo** method. Using the **ReceiveFrom** method, the reply is stored into the string *inp*, and the responding remote endpoint is saved in *rem_ep*. The rest of the messages are sent to *rem_ep*, and additional replies are checked to verify that they are also from *rem_ep*.

```
Public Sub TftpClient
    ' Access a TFTP server using UDP, open a file,
    ' and display it on the console.
    Dim file As String = "testfile.txt"
    Dim srv_ep As New IPEndPoint("192.168.0.2", 69)
    Dim rem_ep, ep As IPEndPoint
    Dim out, inp As String
    Dim uc As New UdpClient()
    Dim us As Socket
    Dim count, op, block As Integer

    us = uc.Client

    ' Build "open for read" command
    out = Chr(0) & Chr(1) & file & Chr(0) & "octet" & Chr(0)
    us.SendTo(out, 0, srv_ep)

    count = us.ReceiveFrom(inp, 1500, rem_ep)
    Console.WriteLine("Remote ip: " & rem_ep.IPAddress & _
        ", port: " & CStr(rem_ep.Port))

    op = Asc(inp.Substring(0,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Substring(1,1))
    block = Asc(inp.Substring(2,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Substring
(3,1))
    Console.WriteLine("Block: " & CStr(Block))
    If (count>4) Then
        Console.WriteLine(inp.Substring(4))
    End If

    While True
        out = Chr(0) & Chr(4) & Chr(block/256) & Chr(block)
        us.SendTo(out, 0, rem_ep)

        If (count<512) Then          ' End if less than 512 bytes
            Exit While
        End If

        count = us.ReceiveFrom(inp, 1500, ep)
        If (ep.IPAddress<>rem_ep.IPAddress) Or _
            (ep.Port<>rem_ep.Port) Then
            Console.WriteLine("Address mismatch")
            Exit While
        End If
        block = Asc(inp.Substring(2,1))*256 + _
            Asc(inp.Substring(3,1))
        Console.WriteLine("Block: " & CStr(Block))
        If (count>4) Then
            Console.WriteLine(inp.Substring(4))
        End If
    End While
End Sub
```

```
End While
```

```
Console.WriteLine("Transfer complete")
us.Close
```

```
End Sub
```

UDP Client Example - Write File using TFTP

In this example, a UDP client is executed on the controller that writes a file to a remote TFTP server. TFTP is a standard UDP-based file server found on many computers.

The **IPEndPoint Object** *srv_ep* is set to the IP address (192.168.0.2) and TFTP port (69) for the remote UDP server. An **UdpClient Object**, *uc*, is created and the **Socket Object** associated with *uc* is stored in *us*. The remainder of the I/O is performed with this **Socket Object**.

A local file is opened for read using a **StreamReader** object. Then a TFTP "file write request" message is built in string *out* and sent to the remote UDP endpoint contained in *srv_ep* using the **SendTo** method. Using the **ReceiveFrom** method, the reply is stored into the string *inp*, and the responding remote endpoint is saved in *rem_ep*. The reply opcode is checked to verify that the server has accepted the write.

The rest of the messages are sent to *rem_ep*, and additional replies are checked to verify that they are also from *rem_ep*.

Data is transferred from the local file to the TFTP server in blocks of 512 bytes, using a "data" message. After each data message, the reply is read from the server and the opcode and acknowledged block number is checked. A more elaborate client program could retransmit data blocks if an error occurs.

```
Public Sub TftpWrite
    ' Access a TFTP server using UDP,
    ' Open a local file for read,
    ' and write the file to the TFTP server
    Dim file As String = "testfile.txt"
    Dim srv_ep As New IPEndPoint("192.168.0.2", 69)
    Dim rem_ep, ep As IPEndPoint
    Dim out, inp As String
    Dim in_file As StreamReader
    Dim uc As New UdpClient()
    Dim us As Socket
    Dim count, op, block, ack, err As Integer
    Dim c As Integer
    Dim ii As Integer

    ' Open file to read from flash
    in_file = New StreamReader("/flash/" & file)

    us = uc.Client

    ' Build "open for write" command
```



```
out = Chr(0) & Chr(2) & file & Chr(0) & "octet" & Chr(0)
us.SendTo(out, 0, srv_ep)

count = us.ReceiveFrom(inp, 1500, rem_ep)
Console.WriteLine("Remote ip: " & rem_ep.IPAddress & _
    ", port: " & CStr(rem_ep.Port))

op = Asc(inp.Substring(0,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Substring(1,1))
Console.WriteLine("Open response: " & CStr(op))

' Handle error
If op <> 4 Then
    If op = 5 Then
        err = Asc(inp.Substring(2,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Sub-
string(3,1))
        Console.WriteLine("Error code: " & CStr(err))
    End If
    GoTo _exit
End If

block = 1

Do
    out = ""
    For ii = 1 To 512          ' Read block of up to 512
bytes
        c = in_file.Read()
        If c < 0 Then Exit For
        out &= Chr(c)
    Next ii

    ' Write data block
    out = Chr(0) & Chr(3) & Chr(block/256) & Chr(block) &
out
    us.SendTo(out, 0, rem_ep)

    ' Read reply
    count = us.ReceiveFrom(inp, 1500, ep)
    If (ep.IPAddress <> rem_ep.IPAddress) OrElse _
        (ep.Port <> rem_ep.Port) Then
        Console.WriteLine("Address mismatch")
        Exit Do
    End If

    op = Asc(inp.Substring(0,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Substring
(1,1))
    If (op <> 4) Then
        Console.WriteLine("Failed to write")
    End If
    ack = Asc(inp.Substring(2,1))*256 + Asc(inp.Substring
(3,1))
    If ack <> block Then
        Console.WriteLine("Ack block mismatch")
    End If
    block += 1
```

```
    Loop While c >= 0           ' Loop until end of file
    Console.WriteLine("Transfer complete")

    _exit:
    us.Close
    in_file.Close()

End Sub
```

14. MODBUS/TCP Communications

MODBUS/TCP Communications Overview

The following pages explain how to communicate across the Ethernet network using the MODBUS/TCP protocol. This is an "open" de facto standard protocol that is widely employed in the industrial manufacturing environment to communicate with intelligent devices such as sensors and instruments. It has been implemented by hundreds of vendors on thousands of different products to communicate digital and analog I/O and register data between devices. In addition to factory applications, MODBUS/TCP is being utilized in building, infrastructure, transportation and energy applications.

MODBUS/TCP is layered on top of the Ethernet TCP protocol. The GPL **Modbus Class** is provided as a convenience to allow a GPL procedure to easily communicate with MODBUS/TCP devices without the need to implement this protocol. This section provides a summary of **the Modbus Class** and examples of how to use it. For additional details on specific methods, see the "GPL Dictionary" in the *PreciseFlex Library*.

For more information on the TCP protocol, see [Network Communications](#). For information about the MODBUS/TCP protocol and standards, see the MODBUS-IDA website at <http://www.modbus.org>.

GPL operates as a Master and communicates to devices that are configured as MODBUS/TCP slaves. In this mode, GPL supports the following MODBUS/TCP functions in [Table 14-1](#):

Table 14-1: Function Code & Description

Function Code	Function Name	Description
1	Read coils	Read one or more digital outputs.
2	Read discrete inputs	Read one or more digital inputs.
3	Read holding registers	Read one or more holding registers.
4	Read input registers	Read one or more input registers.
5	Write single coil	Write a single digital output.
6	Write single register	Write a single holding register.
15	Write multiple coils	Write multiple digital outputs.
16	Write multiple registers	Write multiple holding registers.
43, MEI type 13	Read Device Identification	Read string values identifying the device.

In addition, a Guidance controller can be configured to operate as a MODBUS/TCP slave and accept commands from an 3rd party MODBUS/TCP master. Please see the *Communications* section of the *Introduction to the Software* chapter of the *PreciseFlex Library* for more information on this mode of operation.

Modbus Class

The **Modbus Class** in GPL supports master access to MODBUS/TCP slave devices connected to the local Ethernet.

Table 14-2 summarizes the methods and properties of the class.

Table 14-2: Modbus Class Definitions

Modbus Class Member	Type	Description
New Modbus	Constructor Method	Creates an object for a MODBUS connection and specifies the IP address.
<i>modbus_object</i> .Close	Method	Closes any connections associated with this object.
<i>modbus_object</i> .ReadCoils	Method	Reads one or more outputs.
<i>modbus_object</i> .ReadDeviceId	Method	Reads the device ID strings.
<i>modbus_object</i> .ReadDiscreteInputs	Method	Reads one or more inputs.
<i>modbus_object</i> .ReadHoldingRegisters	Method	Reads one or more holding registers.
<i>modbus_object</i> .ReadInputRegisters	Method	Reads one or more input registers.
<i>modbus_object</i> .Timeout	Get/Set Property	Gets or sets the timeout, in milliseconds, that this connection will wait for a reply before throwing an exception.
<i>modbus_object</i> .WriteMultipleCoils	Method	Writes multiple outputs.
<i>modbus_object</i> .WriteMultipleRegisters	Method	Writes multiple holding registers.
<i>modbus_object</i> .WriteSingleCoil	Method	Writes a single output.
<i>modbus_object</i> .WriteSingleRegister	Method	Writes a single holding register.

Modbus Master Connection

When GPL operates as a MODBUS master, it sets up a TCP client connection with a remote MODBUS/TCP slave. The slave acts as a TCP server. When the connection is no longer needed, it may be closed. To establish a connection, follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	Create an IPEndPoint object for the remote MODBUS/TCP slave. This object normally specifies the IP address of the slave and omits the port number, in which case the standard MODBUS/TCP port is used.
2.	Create a Modbus object using this <i>endpoint_object</i> . Creating a Modbus object does not establish a connection, but simply saves the endpoint information for later.
3.	Use the <i>modbus_object.Timeout</i> property to set an appropriate timeout value for the connection. By default the timeout is infinite.
4.	Use the various Modbus class methods to read or write data. The first time you issue a read or write, GPL attempts to connect with the MODBUS slave. If the slave does not respond, an exception is thrown.
5.	When finished with the MODBUS slave, call <i>modbus_object.Close</i> to close it. Do this at the end of a session, not after each read or write request.

Modbus Master Examples

In both of these examples, the **IPEndPoint** object *ep* for the MODBUS slave is set to IP address 192.168.0.150. A **Modbus** object, *mb* is created that refers to that endpoint. The *mb* object is used for communicating with the slave.

This first example shows a procedure that reads from a MODBUS slave.

```
Public Sub Modbus_Read_Example
    Dim ep As New IPEndPoint("192.168.0.150")
    Dim mb As New Modbus(ep)
    Dim ii As Integer
    Dim bool() As Boolean
    Dim input() As Integer

    mb.ReadCoils(1, 16, bool)
    For ii = 1 To 16
        Console.Write("Coil " & CStr(ii) & ": ")
        Console.WriteLine(bool(ii-1))
    Next ii

    mb.ReadDiscreteInputs(1, 16, bool)
    For ii = 1 To 16
        Console.Write("Input " & CStr(ii) & ": ")
```

```

        Console.WriteLine(bool(ii-1))
    Next ii

    mb.ReadHoldingRegisters(1, 2, input)
    For ii = 1 To 2
        Console.Write("HReg " & CStr(ii) & ": ")
        Console.WriteLine(Hex(input(ii-1)))
    Next ii

    mb.ReadInputRegisters(1, 2, input)
    For ii = 1 To 2
        Console.Write("IReg " & CStr(ii) & ": ")
        Console.WriteLine(Hex(input(ii-1)))
    Next ii

    mb.Close()

End Sub

```

The next example shows a procedure that writes to a MODBUS slave.

```

Public Sub Modbus_Write_Example
    Dim ep As New IPEndPoint("192.168.0.150")
    Dim mb As New Modbus(ep)
    Dim ii As Integer
    Dim output() As Integer
    Dim bool() As Boolean

    For ii = 1 To 16
        mb.WriteSingleCoil(ii, ii And 1)
    Next ii

    mb.WriteSingleRegister(1, 600)

    ReDim bool(15)
    For ii = 0 To 15
        bool(ii) = ii And 2
    Next ii
    mb.WriteMultipleCoils(1, bool)

    ReDim output(15)
    For ii = 0 To 15
        output(ii) = ii*ii
    Next ii

    mb.WriteMultipleRegisters(1, output)

End Sub

```

15. File I/O, Serial I/O, and Streams

File I/O, Serial I/O and Streams Overview

The following pages describe how to read and write data from or to serial ports and files using GPL streams. These pages provide a summary of the classes and methods that may be used, as well as some simple examples. For additional details on individual methods, see the GPL Dictionary.

[Table 15-1](#) summarizes many of the concepts related to file and serial I/O operations that are mentioned in this section.

Table 15-1: Concepts

Concept	Description
ASCII	American Standard Code for Information Interchange. A code that represents the English alphabet, numbers, symbols, and control characters as 7-bit binary numbers. Used by GPL to represent text strings.
Buffer	An internal data area that groups bytes into larger blocks so that they can be read or written more efficiently.
Byte	An 8-bit data item that can hold a number from 0 to 255 or an ASCII character. Streams are composed of bytes.
CR	Carriage Return. The ASCII control character with decimal value 13. Often used as a line terminator.
Directory	A named grouping of files. Also known as a "folder". Directory names have the same properties as normal file names. Directories may be contained inside other directories.
File	A named collection of bytes that may be stored in permanent flash memory (on device /flash) or in temporary system memory (on device /ROMDISK).
File name	The name of a file. File names may be from 1 to 43 characters and contain any printable ASCII character other than "/" or a leading ".". Upper and lower case letters are considered to be different. It is recommended, but not required, that only valid GPL symbol names are used.
Flush	For efficiency, write operations often just add data to an internal buffer and do not access the associated file or serial port. This allows small strings to be accumulated. The system then automatically writes entire buffers to the output device when the buffer is full. The downside of this process is that if the controller is turned off, the contents of the internal buffers are lost. "Flushing" buffers forces their contents to be written to the file or serial port. Closing a stream automatically flushes any associated buffer.
LF	Line Feed. The ASCII control character with decimal value 10. Often used as a line terminator.
Line terminator	A sequence of 1 or 2 ASCII characters that marks the end of a line. Normally LF, CR, or CR-LF.

Concept	Description
Path	The file name, preceded by a list of folders that determine the location of the file. For example: A GPL program file may be found in "/flash/projects/My_project/Main.gpl".
Serial port	An I/O device that transmits and receives byte data using a standard serial protocol. The first RS-232 serial port is named "/dev/com1". Depending on your controller model, you may have additional RS-232 serial ports named "/dev/com2" and "/dev/com3" and an optional RS-485 serial port named "/dev/com4". Remote serial ports are named "/dev/comrx" where "x" is the number of the remote device and "y" is the serial port on the remote device.

The **StreamWriter** and **StreamReader** classes treat data from serial ports or files as a continuous stream of 8-bit bytes. These bytes may be ASCII characters or they may be arbitrary binary data. Many of the methods transfer data to and from GPL string variables. Each byte of a string may be thought of as either an 8-bit binary value or an ASCII character. GPL includes methods and functions to convert between integer data and ASCII characters in strings, for example the **Chr** and **Asc** functions.

Some methods interpret the data stream as a series of lines, terminated by a special "line-terminator" character sequence. The **NewLine** property allows some flexibility in determining the line-terminator used when writing lines.

The **File** class contains methods for managing entire files or directories, such as creating directories or deleting files. All the **File** methods are shared, so there are no **File** objects.

Classes and Methods

GPL provides the **File** built-in class for managing files and directories. [Table 15-2](#) summarizes the various methods available.

Table 15-2: File Class

File Class Member	Type	Description
File.ComputeCRC	Shared Function	Returns a CRC check code computed by reading through a file. Used to verify that a file has not been corrupted.
File.ComputeLength	Shared Function	Returns the length of a file computed by reading through a file and counting the bytes. Used to verify that a file has not been corrupted.
File.Copy	Shared Method	Copies a single file on devices like the flash disk and ROMDISK.
File.CreateDirectory	Shared Method	Creates a directory including any undefined directories in its path.
File.DeleteDirectory	Shared Method	Deletes a single directory, if it is empty.
File.DeleteFile	Shared Method	Deletes a single file.
File.GetDirectories	Shared Method	Returns an array of strings containing the names of directories in a directory.

File Class Member	Type	Description
File.GetFiles	Shared Method	Returns an array of strings containing the names of files in a directory.
File.Length	Shared Function	Efficiently returns the length of a file based on its directory entry.

GPL provides two built-in classes for accessing streams: **StreamReader** and **StreamWriter**. See [Table 15-3](#) and [Table 15-4](#).

Table 15-3: StreamReader Definitions

StreamReader Member	Type	Description
New StreamReader	Constructor Method	Opens a file or serial port device for reading.
<i>streamreader_obj.Close</i>	Method	Closes a file or device.
<i>streamreader_obj.Peek</i>	Method	Reads a single byte but does not remove it from the input stream.
<i>streamreader_obj.Read</i>	Method	Reads a single byte and removes it from the input stream.
<i>streamreader_obj.ReadLine</i>	Method	Reads a line of bytes terminated by LF, CR, or CR-LF.

Table 15-4: StreamWriter Definitions

StreamWriter Member	Type	Description
New StreamWriter	Constructor Method	Opens a file or serial port device for writing.
<i>streamwriter_obj.AutoFlush</i>	Property	If True, automatically flushes output after every write.
<i>streamwriter_obj.Close</i>	Method	Closes a file or device.
<i>streamwriter_obj.Flush</i>	Method	Forces any pending output to occur immediately.
<i>streamwriter_obj.NewLine</i>	Property	Defines the line terminator characters that are appended to output by WriteLine .
<i>streamwriter_obj.Write</i>	Method	Writes a string or number to the output stream with no line terminator.
<i>streamwriter_obj.WriteLine</i>	Method	Writes a string or number to the output stream followed by a line terminator.

The same methods are used for accessing both files and serial ports. The major differences between the two are:

1. Serial ports are normally used for communications, but files are used to save and retrieve data.
2. Data read from files is normally available immediately, but you may need to wait to receive data from a serial port.
3. Files have an "end of file", but serial port data can continue indefinitely.
4. Data written to files is normally buffered for efficiency, but serial port communications are often time-critical so the output is not buffered.

GPL also provides a built-in class for performing output to the serial console or to the GDE console window. See [Table 15-5](#).

Table 15-5: Console Class Definitions

Console Class Member	Type	Description
Console.Write	Shared Method	Diagnostic method that writes a number or a string to the console.
Console.WriteLine	Shared Method	Diagnostic method that writes a number or a string to the console, followed by a line feed (LF) character.

File I/O

Files are used to save and retrieve data to and from a disk, flash or similar device. To locate a file, you must provide a "path" to that file. The first item in the path is the device, followed by a list of folders, and ending with the file name. The device name, folder names and file name are separated by "/" characters. For example:

```
/ROMDISK/my_folder/my_file.dat
```

File names often contain an embedded "." followed by a character sequence that indicates the file type. This file type is treated as simply part of the file name and is ignored by the file system. However, the file type is used by certain system components. For example, the GPL compiler assumes that source files always have the type ".gpl", so a file name might be:

```
/flash/projects/Myproject/Main.gpl
```

Files may be either temporary or permanent. Temporary files are written to a temporary memory-based disk with device name "/ROMDISK". These files consume blocks of the CPU's main memory and are lost when the controller is restarted. Temporary files may be read or written very quickly. Permanent files are written to a disk that is part of the non-volatile flash memory, with device name "/flash". This disk is very slow to write, but may be read quickly. All file paths must begin with either "/ROMDISK" or "/flash".

If your /flash device has been divided into sub-partitions, you can use the devices /flash2, /flash3, , /flash8, depending on how many sub-partitions have been created.

Steps for Writing a File

Follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	Open the file by creating a StreamWriter object. The path to the file to be written is a required argument to the StreamWriter New method. If you want to append to an existing file, set the append input parameter to True. Otherwise a new file is created, overwriting any existing file that matches the path.
2.	Decide if you want your data to be buffered during output. If not, change the AutoFlush property to True , from its default value of False . Setting AutoFlush to True will make the output much slower, especially for the /flash device.
3.	If you are going to organize your output data into lines, decide if the default line terminator (CR-LF) is appropriate. If not, use the NewLine property to change it.
4.	Use the Write or WriteLine methods to write the data.
5.	Use the Close method to force any pending output to be written and to update all internal file data.

Steps for Reading a File

Follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	Open the file by creating a StreamReader object. The path to the file to be read is a required argument to the StreamReader New method.
2.	Read the data by using either the Read or ReadLine methods.
3.	Use the Peek method to check for the end of the file, or enclose the read operation in a Try-Catch block to capture read errors.
4.	Use the Close method to release any system resources held by the object.

File I/O Example

In this example, a temporary file is created using the **StreamWriter** object "o" and written with lines that contain the string values "Line 1" through "Line 10". The file is closed and then opened for read using the **StreamReader** object "i". If the **Peek** method does not indicate end-of-file, a line is read from the input file and written to the console. Finally the input file is closed.

```
Public Sub file_write_read
    ' Write a file, read it back, and display it on the console
    Dim o As New StreamWriter("/ROMDISK/filetest")
    Dim i As StreamReader
    Dim line As String
    Dim ii As Integer

    For ii = 1 To 10
        o.WriteLine("Line " & CStr(ii))
    Next ii
    o.Close()

    i = New StreamReader("/ROMDISK/filetest")
    While i.Peek() >=0          ' Check if end-of-file
        line = i.ReadLine()
        Console.WriteLine(line)
    End While
    i.Close()
End Sub
```

Serial I/O

Serial ports are normally used to communicate with a host computer or an intelligent sensor. The GPL Controller's first RS-232 serial port is named "/dev/com1." If your controller contains additional RS-232 serial ports, they are named "/dev/com2" and "/dev/com3." If your controller contains an RS-485 port that is available to application programs, it is named "/dev/com4". If your system is connected to a Remote IO (RIO) board that provides additional remote serial ports, they are named "/dev/comrxy" where "x" is the number of the RIO board and "y" is the number of the RIO's serial port.

The first serial port is also used by the GPL serial console interface, so you cannot use the serial console if you are using "/dev/com1". When you open device "/dev/com1", the console interface is immediately disabled. You can disable or re-enable the serial console, by changing Parameter Database entry "Serial console enable" (DataID 125). When the serial port is being utilized for program input and output, you can still access the system console via the Telnet interface. Note that system crash messages and certain fatal error messages may be output to /dev/com1 even when it is being used by a GPL procedure. Your remote system must be able to handle these unexpected messages.

Serial ports send and receive streams of byte data in a format and rate determined by their configuration. See instructions elsewhere for setting up the baud rate, character size, stop bits, parity, and hardware flow control settings. Unlike files, a single serial port can be opened for both input and output simultaneously. There is no way for a serial device to detect that a communications link has been closed. Normally the remote device sends a special byte sequence or message to indicate the end of communications.

Steps for Communicating Using a Serial Port

Follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	If you are planning to use the first serial port permanently for communications, set the system parameter "Serial console enable" (DataID 125) to 0.
2.	Open the port for output by creating a StreamWriter object. The device name is a required argument to the StreamWriterNew method. For serial port 1, the device is "/dev/com1."
3.	Open the port for input by creating a StreamReader object. The device name is a required argument to the StreamReader New method. Use the same device as specified in the previous step.
4.	Decide if you want your data to be buffered during output. Generally serial communications is not buffered. If you want it buffered, change the AutoFlush property to False , from its default value of True . If you use buffered output you probably need to use the Flush method to make sure your output is transmitted when you expect.
5.	If you are going to organize your output data into lines, decide if the default line terminator (CR-LF) is appropriate. If not, use the NewLine property to change it.
6.	Use the Write or WriteLine methods on your StreamWriter object to write data.
7.	If you do not want your input procedure to be blocked while waiting for data to be received, use the Peek method to check if data is present before using Read .
8.	Use the Read or ReadLine methods on your StreamReader object to read data.
9.	Use the Close method to release the serial ports for other use and free system resources.

Serial I/O Example

In this example, serial port 1 is used to communicate with an operator terminal connected to the port. The program prompts the operator to type a character and waits until they do. Then it outputs a message describing the character to the serial port. The device "/dev/com1" is opened for both output and input by creating both **StreamWriter** and **StreamReader** objects, "o" and "i", respectively. The output line terminator is set to CR by using the **NewLine** property. The procedure polls the input every 500 milliseconds for input. If no input is received, a series of dots is output. When an input character is received, it is converted to a readable string and a message is written back to the serial port. When an ASCII ESC character (decimal value 27) is received, the procedure closes the streams and exits.

```
Public Sub com1
    ' Open com1, echo info about any input.
    Dim o As New StreamWriter("/dev/com1")
```

```
Dim i As New StreamReader("/dev/com1")
Dim c As Integer
Dim ss As String

o.NewLine = Chr(GPL_CR) ' Set CR as the line terminator
o.WriteLine("Type characters, hit ESC to quit.")

Do
    o.Write("Waiting for input ")
    While i.Peek() < 0
        Thread.Sleep(500)
        o.Write(".")
    End While
    o.WriteLine("")

    c = i.Read()
    If c >= &H20 Then
        ss = Chr(c)
    Else
        ss = "^" & Chr(c+&H40)
    End If

    o.WriteLine("You typed " & "\"" & ss & _
        & "\"" = " & CStr(c))
Loop While c <> 27 ' Exit if ESC typed

i.Close()
o.Close()
End Sub
```

Console Output

As a convenience during program development and testing, serial output may be performed to the GPL console. The actual destination of console output depends on the presence of the *-event* switch on the Start console command. If *-event* is not present, console output is sent to the first serial port named "/dev/com1". If *-event* is present, console output is sent to GDE where it is displayed in the GPL Output window.

For more information on how to use and configure the serial ports, see the previous Serial I/O section.

The console output methods are overloaded and allow either a numeric value or string to be output. For output that combines both string and numeric values, use the **CStr** function.

Example

```
Public Sub Main
    Dim ii As Integer
    For ii = 1 To 10
        Console.WriteLine("The square of " & CStr(ii) & _
            & " is " & CStr(ii*ii))
    Next ii
End Sub
```

Next ii
End Sub

Non-Volatile Memory (NVRAM)

Some Precise controllers manufactured after June 2013 include a small area of Non-Volatile Memory (NVRAM) that is user accessible. The NVRAM contents are preserved when the controller power is turned off. This area was added to permit applications to store a limited amount of key dynamic state information such as performance statistics or System Error Log entries.

The NVRAM is different from the non-volatile flash memory (device /flash) in that the NVRAM is not affected by unexpected power-off conditions. After writing to the /flash device, you must wait for at least 15 seconds before powering off the controller. If you do not wait, the /flash contents may become corrupted and you may lose all of the files stored on the /flash device. The NVRAM can be written without danger of corrupting existing data, even if the power is turned off during a write operation. Of course, the data actively being written may be lost.

Another difference is that the flash memory can only be written a finite (but relatively large) number of times, whereas the NVRAM can be written an unlimited number of times.

The major downside of the NVRAM is that its storage area is small compared to the flash memory. Depending on your controller model and options, the NVRAM size may be 8Kbytes or 32Kbytes. On these devices, about 320 bytes are reserved and cannot be written.

/NVRAM Files

Data may be stored in files on the NVRAM by specifying the device /NVRAM. This device may be used with all types of I/O methods, including **StreamWriter**, **StreamReader**, and FTP.

File Names

To maximize the space available for data, a maximum of 16 NVRAM files may be created, and the names must be "file1" through "file16".

Maximum File Size

When an NVRAM file is created, its maximum size should be defined by appending the following switch to the file path specification:

-size *n*

where *n* is the maximum size of the file, in bytes. This value may range from 4 to the maximum number of unused bytes on the device (less than 7873). Once a file is created, its size cannot be changed unless the file is deleted and created again.

If “-size *n*” is omitted when creating a new file, a default size of 1024 bytes is assumed.

Circular Files

To assist in logging data to the NVRAM, a file may be specified to act as a circular buffer that wraps around to the beginning once it reaches its maximum size. This mode of operation is enabled by appending the following switch to the file path specification:

-wrap

In a circular file, new data overwrites the oldest data once the maximum file size is reached. In a normal non-circular file, an error is signaled if an attempt is made to write when the file is full.

By searching for the final record in a file, you can always find the latest entry, even after a power failure.

File Records

When a NVRAM file is written, the data is stored as a record. Each record can have a maximum length of 255 bytes. Each record is written *atomically*, that is, either the entire record is written or none of the record is written, even if the power fails during the write operation. In a circular file, entire records from the start of the file are removed atomically before new records are added. In this way, records in the file are never left in a partially updated state.

Delaying an output request to the NVRAM by buffering defeats some of the NVRAM benefits, since buffered data may be lost during a power fail. To avoid this problem, **StreamWriter** objects for device /NVRAM have **AutoFlush** enabled by default. If you disable **AutoFlush**, you need to be aware of the implications and use the **Flush** method appropriately.

There is one byte of overhead for the entire file, and one byte for each record. You should account for this overhead when computing the maximum number of records that a file can contain.

There are no special considerations for reading an NVRAM file except that attempting to read a circular file while it is being written may return inconsistent data.

FTP Access

The files in the /NVRAM device may be accessed by a remote FTP client. If your host computer supports this service, the /NVRAM folder shows up in the top-level FTP directory. FTP always displays the maximum allocated file size and the date and time the file was last modified.

File Writing Examples

In this example, a non-circular file with a maximum length of 64 bytes is created,

```
Dim tfile As New StreamWriter("/NVRAM/file2 -size 64", True)
Dim ii As Integer
For ii = 1 To 100
    tfile.WriteLine("Record " & CStr(ii))
Next ii
tfile.Close
```

This program fails with `ii = 6` with error -323 (Device full). At this point, `/NVRAM/file2` contains the following records:

```
Record 1
Record 2
Record 3
Record 4
Record 5
```

In the next example, a circular file is created of the same size.

```
Dim tfile As New StreamWriter("/NVRAM/file3 -size 64 -wrap",
True)
Dim ii As Integer
For ii = 1 To 100
    tfile.WriteLine("Record " & CStr(ii))
Next ii
tfile.Clos
```

This program does not fail. After execution completes, `/NVRAM/file3` contains the final records written:

```
Record 96
Record 97
Record 98
Record 99
Record 100
```

Automatically Logging Error Messages to the NVRAM

In GPL 4.0 and later, a new feature was added that automatically writes system error messages into a specified file as the errors occur. This feature is enabled by writing the file name into the Parameter Database entry "Error log file" (DataID 323). This feature was designed with the NVRAM in mind but can be used with other file structured devices as well.

To automatically enable error message logging into the NVRAM, a file name and file size must be specified. For example, DataID 323 could be set to:

```
"/NVRAM/file1 -size 7500 -wrap"
```

This would write all new error messages into file1 using most of the available NVRAM space. The maximum size could be set to 7872. The "-wrap" will create a circular buffer so that older messages will be over-written by new messages when the file becomes full.

Prior to enabling error logging, the console command "Del" should be used to make space for the error log file.

Please see the documentation on "Error log file" (DataID 323) for a full list of the options available with this feature.

Non-Volatile Integer Data

For some applications, only a small amount of data needs to be saved and the flexibility offered by the file system is not required.

GPL provides eight 32-bit signed integers that are stored in the NVRAM and accessed by DataID 1892 "GPL program NVRAM variable array". These DataID values may be freely read or written by GPL programs or the web interface. The most recent value written is always saved in the NVRAM. The four bytes that make up each 32-bit value are always written atomically, so each 32-bit value is always valid.

Flash Sub-Partitions

The flash memory on your controller is divided into a number of partitions. These partitions may be seen in DataID 123 "Flash partition size, Kbytes". The standard partitions are as follows:

- 1 - dBUG boot loader
- 2 - FPGA firmware
- 3 - GPL system firmware
- 4 - User flash disk
- 5 - System data

Files containing system configuration, user programs, and user data are all stored in partition 4, the "User flash disk" partition. By default, this entire partition is accessed by the device "/flash".

Flash Corruption

One characteristic of the flash device on Precise controllers is that sectors must be erased before they are written. An entire 128Kbyte sector must be erased and re-written, even if only a small part of the data is changed. During this erase-write operation, if a power failure occurs or controller

power is turned off, large amounts of data may be lost, including the area of the flash that keeps track of files within the partition.

Once the flash partition is corrupted, there is no alternative but to reinitialize (format) the affected partition and restore the data from backup.

For this reason, we do not recommend writing to files on the flash if there is any danger of power interruption.

Sub-Partitions

When corruption occurs, it is limited to the single partition that is being written. This is why corrupting the User flash area does not affect the GPL system or FPGA firmware.

To limit the area of possible corruption, the single Flash disk partition may be divided into multiple independent partitions. Static program and configuration data may be kept in one partition that is never written during runtime. Less critical dynamic data may be written to a different partition. If that partition is corrupted due to power interruption, only that data is lost and only the corrupted partition needs to be reformatted.

The sub-partitions names are `"/flash2"`, `"/flash3"`, `"/flash8"`. These names only appear if that sub-partition has been configured for your flash disk. These names may be used anywhere that the main flash disk name `"/flash"` is valid.

If a controller with sub-partitions is downgraded to an older version of GPL that does not support sub-partitions, only the main `"/flash"` partition is accessible and its size will be smaller than usual due to the presence of the sub-partitions. If you issue a `"format"` command on that old GPL system, the main partition size is restored and all sub-partitions are lost.

Creating Sub-Partitions

Sub-partitions are created by setting non-zero values into the DataID 137 "User flash sub-partitions, Kbytes" array. Each element of this array specifies the size of a sub-partition, in Kbytes. This array is stored internally on the flash device and does not appear in any configuration .pac files. The sub-partitions `"/flash2"`, `"/flash3"`, `"/flash8"` sizes correspond to the values of DataID 137 array elements. If a partition size is 0, that name does not appear.

The size of the main partition `"/flash"` is decreased to reflect the space used by the sub-partitions. You must leave at least 128Kbytes for the main partition after all sub-partitions are allocated.

All sub-partition sizes must be 0 or multiples of 128. To create sub-partitions, follow this procedure:

Step	Action
1.	Backup any data on the main flash disk "/flash" or any sub-partitions that currently exist. All this data will be lost during this process.
2.	Using the web interface, set DataID 137 values to the partition sizes you want. All sizes must be a multiple of 128. There must be at least 128 left over that will be assigned to the main "/flash" partition.
3.	Reboot. You will get numerous error messages at startup regarding /flash, fsmount, and missing parameter DB files.
4.	If at this point, you decide you wanted to keep your old partitions, do not continue with the next step. Instead, restore DataID 137 to its original values and reboot.
5.	Issue the format command for each sub-partition using the serial console, GDE console, Telnet, or the web interface System Console. Enter the command "format -ERASE /flashn" where n is empty for the main partition and 2 through 8 for additional partitions.
6.	Verify the sizes of the sub-partitions by entering the command "dir -stat /flashn" where n is empty for the main partition and 2 through 8 for additional partitions.
7.	Restore your data to the various partitions. Be sure to restore the "config" folder to the main /flash device.
8.	Reboot. You should not get any error messages.

16. Vision Guidance

Vision Guidance Overview

The following pages describe how to access the PreciseVision machine vision system from a GPL procedure and use the vision data in a motion application.

PreciseVision is a software application that runs on a PC. The PC, in turn, is connected to cameras that acquire images to be processed. The vision processing performed by PreciseVision is specified in terms of "vision tools" and "vision processes". Details about how to setup and program PreciseVision may be found in the *PreciseFlex Library*, under "PreciseVision Machine Vision System."

In order for GPL to send commands to PreciseVision, GPL must know the IP address for the PC that is executing PreciseVision. This value is specified in the Configuration and Parameter Database in the "Vision server IP address" (DataID 424).

[Table 16-1](#) summarizes some of the concepts related to vision operations that are mentioned in this section.

Table 16-1: Vision Operations Concepts

Concept	Description
Client	A process that makes requests to a server and handles the responses. Normally a client initiates all communications and does not receive data except in response to a request.
Server	A process that responds to requests and sends responses. It normally does not initiate I/O.
Vision Tool	A single operation executed by PreciseVision. A typical tool might find an object (e.g. a Finder Tool), measure a dimension (e.g. an Edge Locator) or locate a key feature (e.g. a Line Fitter).
Vision Process	A series of vision tools performed on an image by PreciseVision. The tools in the process normally produce Vision Results that are used by a GPL procedure.
Vision Result	The output of a Vision Tool that is executed by PreciseVision. A set of Results may contain pass/fail information, location data, or general numeric data. Some tools only generate a single set of results (e.g. a Line Fitter) while others generate multiple sets of results (e.g. a Finder). A single set of results is normally stored in a VisResult object in GPL.

When active, PreciseVision acts as a server that fields requests from client GPL procedures. These client GPL procedures execute on a Precise Controller and communicate with the PC via Ethernet. By designing GPL procedures as clients of PreciseVision, GPL procedures have complete control over when pictures are taken and processed.

To take a picture and analyze its results, a GPL procedure issues a command to PreciseVision to execute a "vision process". Normally, a vision process consists of a tool that takes a picture (i.e. an Acquisition Tool) followed by additional tools to process and analyze the picture. In the simplest case, a vision process consists of a single tool that operates on an existing picture. At times, a process can be quite complex and might contain dozens of tools that inspect multiple features of parts to verify that the parts are correct. From GPL's point of view, a vision process is a single, indivisible operation. That is, after a GPL procedure starts a vision process, no results are available until after the process completes its execution. When the process is done running, GPL can then interrogate PreciseVision for its results.

In order for GPL to execute a process and retrieve the results, GPL has to know the name that has been assigned to the process in PreciseVision and the names of any tools for which results are desired. Once the vision process has completed execution, a GPL procedure can utilize the tool names to retrieve the results from any tool. These results typically indicate the locations of parts that are to be manipulated and the type of each part. In addition, vision can be used to check for key dimensions or other features of the parts and can return information to GPL about the quality of a part. As mentioned above, some tools return only a single set of results while others can return multiple sets of information.

Each time that a vision process is executed, all of the previous results of its tools are lost and replaced by the newly computed results. However, if a second vision process is executed using another communication object, the results of first vision process are preserved.

The following pages provide a summary of the built-in GPL classes and methods that act as an interface to the PreciseVision system, as well as some simple examples.

Classes and Methods

The network communication interface between the Precise controller and the PreciseVision system is implemented by a **Vision** class and its associated objects. Its methods and properties allow a GPL procedure to establish a connection with PreciseVision, run a vision process, and obtain the results from that process.

The **VisResult** class defines objects that each store a single set of results from a vision tool. These objects may contain pass/fail information, location data, or general numeric data, depending on the vision tool.

[Table 16-2](#) and [Table 16-3](#) summarize the available members for the vision classes. For additional details on individual vision methods and properties, please see the "GPL Dictionary."

Table 16-2: Vision Class Definitions

Vision Class Member	Type	Description
New Vision	Constructor Method	Creates an empty Vision object. Does not communicate with PreciseVision.
<i>vision_object</i> . .Disconnect	Method	Closes any open connection associated with a vision object.
<i>vision_object</i> . .ErrorCode	Property	Returns the numeric error code for the last executed vision process. A value of 0 indicates success; a negative value indicates an error.
<i>vision_object</i> . .Instance	Property	Sets and gets the number of the PreciseVision instance that is associated with a vision object.
<i>vision_object</i> . .IPAddress	Property	Sets and gets the IP address of the PC that is running the PreciseVision application software associated with a vision object.
<i>vision_object</i> . .Process	Method	Requests that PreciseVision execute a vision process and waits for it to complete. Connects to PreciseVision if there is currently no connection.
<i>vision_object</i> . .Result	Method	Returns a VisResult object that contains a single set of results from a previously executed vision tool. Connects to PreciseVision if there is currently no connection.
<i>vision_object</i> . .ResultCount	Method	Returns the number of sets of vision results created by a vision tool the last time it was executed. Connects to PreciseVision if there is currently no connection.
<i>vision_object</i> . .Status	Property	Returns a numeric value indicating the status of a vision process: 0 = No vision process for this object, 1 = Process is running, 2 = Process complete but with error, 3 = Process complete with success.
<i>vision_object</i> . .ToolProperty	Property	Sets or gets a property value of a PreciseVision tool or a general "system" property for the vision server connected to a vision object.

Table 16-3: VisResult Class Definitions

VisResult Class Member	Type	Description
New VisResult	Constructor Method	Creates an empty VisResult object. Not useful since VisResult objects are normally created by the <i>vision_object</i> . .Result method.
<i>visresult_object</i> . .ErrorCode	Property	Returns the numeric error code for this result. A value of 0 indicates success; a negative value indicates an error. A positive value indicates a non-critical error occurred.

VisResult Class Member	Type	Description
<i>visresult_object</i> .Info	Property	Returns the nth numeric information field contained in this set of results.
<i>visresult_object</i> .InfoCount	Property	Returns the number of numeric information items in this set of results.
<i>visresult_object</i> .InfoString	Property	Returns a String value if the set of vision results includes text information.
<i>visresult_object</i> .InspectActual	Property	Returns the value of the tool property that was tested in the vision inspection process.
<i>visresult_object</i> .InspectPassed	Property	Returns True if a property of the vision results satisfied the tool's vision inspection criteria.
<i>visresult_object</i> .Loc	Property	Returns the position and orientation from a set of results as a Cartesian Location object.
<i>visresult_object</i> .ProcessID	Property	Returns the ID of the vision process that generated the result.
<i>visresult_object</i> .Type	Property	Returns the type of this set of results. Currently always zero.

Vision Interface

Vision objects are used to communicate with the PreciseVision system. The communications occur across a TCP/IP Ethernet link between the Precise controller and the PC running PreciseVision. Simply creating a **Vision** object does not cause any communication to occur.

The **Vision** methods **Process**, **Result**, and **ResultCount** all send a request to PreciseVision and wait for a reply. There is no method to explicitly connect to PreciseVision. A connection is automatically established when one of these methods is called.

When making a connection, the Precise controller attempts to communicate with TCP port 1410 at the IP address specified by the parameter database entry "Vision server IP address" (DataID 424). If a connection cannot be made, an exception is thrown. Once a request is sent, PreciseVision must respond within 30 seconds or an exception is generated.

The steps for preparing PreciseVision to service requests and to execute vision processes for a Precise controller are as follows:

1. Physically connect your Precise controller with the PC running PreciseVision. Make sure the Ethernet IP addresses are setup properly and the PC can communicate with the GPL controller.
2. Using PreciseVision on the PC, create a vision process that uses vision tools to acquire an image and perform the desired vision operations.
3. Make sure that PreciseVision is active and listening for requests.

To develop a vision guidance application that will execute on a Precise controller and communicate with PreciseVision, write and execute a GPL procedure that does the following:

1. Creates a **Vision** object to serve as the interface to PreciseVision.
2. Executes a **Vision Process** method to initiate a vision process in PreciseVision. The process name specified in this method must match a vision process defined within PreciseVision.
3. Invokes the **ResultCount** method to determine how many sets of results were generated by each vision tool of interest.
4. Accesses the **Result** method for each vision tool of interest to obtain a **VisResult** object that contains the output for the tool.
5. Uses the **VisResult** class properties and methods to obtain specific vision data that can be applied in your GPL procedure.
6. Executes the **VisionDisconnect** method when done with all vision processing to close the communication connection.

Vision Procedure Example

In this example, PreciseVision is used to determine the location of a part that is then acquired by the robot. The output of the vision process is used to create a reference frame, and the robot is moved to a point relative to that reference frame.

In particular, the robot moves to the location *safe* to avoid blocking the camera's field-of-view. The **Vision** object *vis* is then used to connect with PreciseVision and execute the vision process "Main". This vision process takes a picture and executes vision tools to locate the part and perform any desired visual verifications. At the end of the vision process, all that GPL requires is the results of the tool "part1", which contains the location of the part. The GPL procedure then checks the **ResultCount** property to ensure that at least one set of results is available. The **Result** method returns the first set of results from "part1" in the **VisResult** object *vResult*. The returned vision location is used to create the object *vsRefFrame*, which is the reference frame for location *vsRelPoint*. The robot moves to *vsRelPoint* and finally moves back to its *safe* location.

```
Public Sub MAIN
    Dim vis As New Vision
    Dim vResult As New VisResult

    Robot.Attached = 1
    Move.Loc(safe, vsProfile)

    vis.Process("Main") ' Run vision process "Main"
    If vis.ResultCount("part1") = 0 Then
        Console.WriteLine("Vision object not found")
    End If
End Sub
```

```
        Goto done
    End If
    vResult = vis.Result("part1", 1) ' Get results

    ' Create a reference frame object and set it
    ' equal to the returned vision location
    Dim vsRefFrame As New RefFrame
    vsRefFrame.Loc.PosWrtRef = vResult.Loc

    ' Pickup point is relative to new frame
    vsRelPoint.RefFrame = vsRefFrame

    Move.Approach(vsRelPoint, vsProfile)
    Move.Loc(vsRelPoint, vsProfile)
    Move.Approach(vsRelPoint, vsProfile)

    ' Move back to safe location
    Move.Loc(safe, vsProfile)

done:
End Sub
```

17. Managing and Executing GPL Projects

Projects and Files

In GPL, rather than executing a "program", a "Project" is the basic executable entity. Console commands are provided for loading, compiling, and executing a Project. A Project consists of two or more text files that are stored within a single disk folder (directory). Each file is a standard human-readable ASCII file. The folder name and the Project name are synonymous.

The file "Project.gpr" must always be present in each project folder and is referred to as the "Project File". This file contains information on the other files within the Project including which program is invoked when the Project begins execution. Each GPL source file has a "gpl" extension. These files each can contain one or more modules, which in-turn can contain multiple variable declarations and procedures. A Project can also contain one, several or no files with a "gpo" extension. This type of file contains a global module that is used to defined global **Location** and **Profile** objects. This file is convenient for storing taught robot locations and general motion Profiles that are accessible by all procedures within the Project.

Loading a Project into memory or copying a Project from memory or between disk units is equivalent to copying a file folder and all of its contents. Multiple Projects can be present in memory although only one Project can be executed at any given time.

Modules

Only modules can be found at the outer-most level of a file. [In the future, class declarations will also be allowed]. These modules contain variable declarations such as **Public**, **Private**, and **Dim** statements, or procedure declarations such as **Sub** or **Function** statements. A procedure or module-level variable can be accessed by fully specifying its name using the syntax:

```
module_name.variable_name  
-or-  
module_name.procedure_name
```

Within a single module, all procedures and module-level variables can be freely accessed. However, only **Public** procedures and variables in other modules can be accessed. If **Public** variables or procedures with the same name are found in two different modules, they can only be accessed by using the fully-specified name, to disambiguate the multiple definitions.

Executing a Project

Before a Project can be executed, it must be loaded into memory and compiled. The steps are as follows:

1. Load the Project and associated files into memory.
2. Issue a compile request for the Project.
3. Issue a start request for the Project.

The Project begins execution at the "start" procedure specified in the Project File (Project.gpr). Note that the start procedure must be declared **Public**.

18. Thread Control

Thread Control Overview

When a GPL Project begins execution, its main procedure starts running in a user program "thread." Each thread has its own execution stack and runs independently of all other program and system threads.

The GPL system supports the simultaneous execution of up to 64 GPL user program threads. These threads allow simultaneous execution of multiple projects. Even more importantly, a main thread can initiate and control the execution of additional procedures in their own threads. This is very convenient for the execution of communications servers, digital I/O scanners, and cell control tasks that are best executed asynchronously from the main execution thread. In general, executing procedures that operate asynchronously in their own threads simplifies the design, coding, and debugging of the procedure.

Thread Synchronization

When multiple GPL threads are employed within a single project, it is often necessary to synchronize them. For example, a server thread may wait for a client thread to post a command, and the client may wait for the server to respond.

Two or more threads can efficiently be synchronized by using the **SendEvent** and **WaitEvent** methods. Any GPL thread can send a synchronization message called an *event* to any other GPL thread. Up to 16 independent events per thread can be sent to permit the receiving thread to discriminate between types of events. The events are numbered 1 through 16. The target thread uses **WaitEvent** to efficiently wait for one or more of these events to be received. While a thread is waiting for an event, it uses almost no CPU time.

Thread Scheduling

GPL includes a multi-threaded preemptive priority-driven real-time operating system. User program threads can be swapped out or preempted by system threads any time the system clock ticks or whenever an I/O device interrupt occurs. Clock tick interrupts occur every 125 μ sec (8KHz) and cause the system to swap out the current thread and begin execution of servo control threads and other high priority system threads. After the system threads complete, eligible user threads are executed during the remainder of the time before the next clock tick.

The standard thread scheduling algorithm for normal user threads is a round-robin scheme. In this approach, each user thread is permitted to execute for up to one millisecond before the next user thread that is ready to run is swapped in. Since the clock ticks at 8KHz, a user thread runs for up to eight 125 μ sec ticks. If a user thread is active when the clock ticks, the thread's "remaining tick count" is decremented by 1, even if it did not run for the entire previous tick. When this count hits 0, the thread is moved to the end of the round-robin list. After all other user threads and system threads have had a chance to run, the original thread will move to the start of the round-robin list and will resume execution.

When a thread goes to sleep, is blocked, or is preempted, its remaining tick count is not decremented, so when it resumes execution, it gets the remainder of the 8 ticks that are left. When a thread is blocked or uses the **Thread.Sleep** method, all other threads continue to execute, using whatever time is available. When a user thread is unblocked or wakes from a sleep, it goes to the end of the round-robin list with whatever time it had left in its 1 msec interval. When a thread is preempted by a higher priority thread and resumed, it continues executing for whatever time it has left. It is not put at the end of the round-robin list.

If many user threads and system threads are busy, a given user thread may only get to run for 1 out of n milliseconds, where n is the number of busy threads. Nonetheless, the standard round-robin scheduling provides a good balance for most applications. For some time-critical user threads, this scheduling method may be undesirable.

An alternate scheduling algorithm, enabled by the **Thread.Schedule** method, allows critical user threads to run in a timely manner ahead of all other standard-priority threads. This algorithm is based on the POSIX *sporadic scheduling* policy. The algorithm schedules specified threads as follows:

- At a fixed repetition rate, any specified high priority user thread has its priority raised above the standard thread priority.
- After the high priority thread has run for a specified period of time, the thread's priority is returned to the standard level, and it is placed at the end of the round-robin queue of standard-level threads.
- The high priority thread may run at standard priority if it gets to the front of the round-robin queue before the start of its next high priority period.

For more information on the specifics of the alternative scheduling algorithm, please see the dictionary page on the **Thread.Schedule** method.

The Thread Class

To control the starting, stopping, and monitoring of independent threads, GPL includes a **Thread Class** that includes the required methods and properties. In [Table 18-1](#), the members of this **Class** are briefly described. Completion information on these class members are provided in the GPL Dictionary pages.

Table 18-1: Thread Class Definitions

Member	Type	Description
New Thread	Constructor Method	Creates a thread object and associates it with a procedure.
<i>thread_object</i> . Abort	Method	Stops execution of a thread such that it cannot be resumed.
<i>thread_object</i> . Argument	Property	Sets or gets a numeric value that can be used as a parameter for a thread.
Thread.CurrentThread	Shared Method	Returns a thread object for the currently executing thread.
<i>thread_object</i> . Join	Method	Waits for a thread to complete execution, with a timeout.
<i>thread_object</i> . Name	Get Property	Returns a String containing the name of the thread associated with this object.
<i>thread_object</i> . Project	Get Property	Returns a String containing the name of the project associated with this object.
<i>thread_object</i> . Resume	Method	Resumes execution of a thread that was suspended.
Thread.Schedule	Shared Method	Changes the execution priority and thread scheduling algorithm for the current thread.
<i>thread_object</i> . SendEvent	Method	Sends an event to a thread to notify it that a significant transition has occurred.
Thread.Sleep	Shared Method	Causes the current thread to stop execution for a specified amount of time.
<i>thread_object</i> . Start	Method	Initializes and starts execution of a procedure as an independent thread.
<i>thread_object</i> . StartProcedure	Get Property	Returns a String containing the name of the start procedure associated with this object.
<i>thread_object</i> . Suspend	Method	Suspends execution of a thread so that it can be resumed.
Thread.TestAndSet	Shared Method	Atomically reads a numeric variable and writes a new value. Used for restricting access to data shared between threads.
<i>thread_object</i> . ThreadState	Get Property	Returns an integer indicating the execution state of a thread.
Thread.WaitEvent	Shared Method	Causes the current thread to wait for an event.

Thread-Safe Data Access in GPL

In applications that use more than one user program thread, the operating system dynamically switches execution of the threads. From instant to instant, there is no guarantee that any particular thread will continue execution. A thread can be swapped out and another thread swapped in at any moment, even in the middle of an instruction.

When two or more user program threads access the same data, they may interact in an unexpected way. For example, if two user threads both attempt to increment the same GPL variable, an intermittent bug may occur. If both threads execute the statement: $a = a + 1$, the following (Table 18-2) may happen, assuming a starts at value of 0:

Table 18-2: Thread Switching & Action

Thread Switching	Thread Action
Thread 1 is running.	Thread 1 reads the value of a . It reads the value 0.
Thread 2 swaps in.	Thread 2 reads the value of a . It reads the value 0.
Thread 2 continues.	Thread 2 adds 1 to its value and writes it to a .
Thread 1 resumes.	Thread 1 adds 1 to the value 0 it read previously, and writes it to a .

Even though both threads intended to add 1 to a , the final value of a is 1 instead of the expected value of 2.

When an operation is *thread-safe* it means that it produces the same results regardless of whether a single thread or multiple threads are performing it.

Thread-Safe Data Types in GPL

Numeric and Boolean data reading is always thread-safe. All numeric data types may be read, regardless of how the data is being written. You will always get one of the values that someone has written. You can also read numeric data from statically allocated arrays or objects.

Simple writing of numeric data is also thread-safe. If multiple threads write the same variable, the result will always be one of the values written. If only one thread is writing a numeric variable, there is no need to interlock the access with threads that are reading.

Operations that first read and then write a numeric variable are not thread-safe, as illustrated by the example in the previous section. It is always possible for another thread to write the data value while the original thread is modifying it.

Groupings of numeric values (arrays and objects with multiple embedded values) are not thread-safe. For example, if one thread changes the X and Y values of a location, a second thread may see a transient condition where only the X or Y is changed.

String data is not thread safe. If one thread is reading a string value while another thread is writing it, the reader may see a mixture of the old data and the new data. Simple string assignment

is thread-safe since the final value will be one of the values written. However most string methods that modify the string values are not thread-safe.

Objects are generally not thread-safe and there is no interlocking among the object fields. However individual numeric fields within an object are thread-safe.

Dynamic arrays are not thread-safe, even if they contain numeric data. These are arrays whose sizes are altered using a **ReDim** statement to change their size during execution. Using **ReDim** to change an array size while other threads are accessing the array *could result in a system crash that requires rebooting*.

Creating Thread-Safe Interlocks

Thread-safe interlocks may be created using the GPL **Thread.TestAndSet** method. This method is fully described in the **GPL Dictionary** section. Sample lock and unlock routines are shown below:

```
' Lock the semaphore. Wait until lock is obtained.
Public Sub acquire_sem(ByRef sem_var As Integer)
    While Thread.TestAndSet(sem_var, 1) <> 0
        Thread.Sleep(0)
    End While
End Sub

' Unlock the semaphore
Public Sub release_sem(ByRef sem_var As Integer)
    sem_var = 0
End Sub
```

This `acquire_sem()` routine waits indefinitely until the lock can be obtained. If desired, this routine can be enhanced to wait for a limited time and return an error or throw an exception if that time limit is exceeded.

You can use these routines to lock a thread during an unsafe data access, to guarantee that no unsafe access occurs. The example below shows how to safely interlock an add operation on a numeric array element.

```
Public my_lock As Integer
Public my_array(1) As Integer

Public Sub AddArray(ByVal inc As Integer)
    acquire_sem(my_lock)    ' Prohibit access by other threads
    my_array(0) = my_array(0) + inc
    release_sem(my_lock)    ' Allow write access by other
threads
End Sub
```

For numeric values, the read operation is thread-safe, so no special action is required, but for a string operation, both the read and write operations need to be interlocked. The example below shows interlocking both the read and write operation for a string variable.

```
Public my_lock As Integer

Public Sub AppendString(ByRef sg As String, ByVal app As String)
    acquire_sem(my_lock)      ' Prohibit access by other threads
    sg &= app                 ' Modify string while locked
    release_sem(my_lock)     ' Allow access by other threads
End Sub

Public Function ReadString(ByRef sg As String) As String
    Dim ret_string As String
    acquire_sem(my_lock)     ' Prohibit access by other threads
    ret_string = sg         ' Copy string while locked
    release_sem(my_lock)    ' Allow access by other threads
    Return ret_string
End Function
```

19. XML Data Exchange

XML Data Exchange Overview

XML (eXtensible Markup Language) is a standard text formatting language derived from SGML (the Standard Generalized Markup Language, ISO 8879). It was originally designed to represent documents for electronic publishing, but it has been adapted to represent structured data for storage and transmission on networks. Details about XML can be found at <http://www.w3.org/XML>. The complete specifications for XML can be found at <http://www.w3.org/XML/Core/#Publications>.

The GPL implementation of XML is primarily intended to simplify the storage and bi-directional exchange of structured data between a host computer and a Guidance Controller. For example, the information contained in both simple and complex data structures (such as GPL Objects) can be easily and efficiently converted to an XML text file. This file can be stored in flash or transmitted to a host computer where it can be decoded using standard XML tools. Conversely, an XML file generated on a host computer can be read by GPL and converted to a tree of information that is readily accessible by a GPL application program. This data can be used to reconstruct application specific Objects or other data structures.

Given the intended use of XML, the GPL implementation does not include the extensive support required for general document specification and editing. In particular, it has only limited support for namespaces and entities.

The GPL methods and properties for handling XML are layered on top of the open-source *libxml2* library, available at <http://xmlsoft.org>. Links to documentation for this library may be found at that website.

The XML text file contains 7-bit ASCII or UTF-8 characters that encode the data. Symbols and strings enclosed in < > have special meaning to XML.

The following lines illustrate some sample XML text:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<procedureControl cellId="TestCell">
  <command>start</command>
</procedureControl>
```

The first line contains a comment indicating the XML version. The next line begins an **entity** named *procedureControl* that has an **attribute** named *cellId* with a value of "TestCell". It is followed by a nested **entity** named *command* with the value of "start". The final line ends the *procedureControl* entity. Entities and attributes are part of the Document Object Model described in the next section.

Document Object Model (DOM)

Because XML historically was designed for electronic publishing, a single, self-contained section of XML is called a *document*, even though it may contain arbitrary data. GPL parses existing XML text documents and creates new XML documents, by converting them to and from a tree structure stored in the controller's memory. A parsed XML document consists of nodes for items in the document, arranged in a tree that reflects how items in the document are nested. The tree is constructed using a subset of the Document Object Model (DOM) Core Interfaces as described in: <http://www.w3.org/TR/REC-DOM-Level-1> and methods similar to those found in Visual Basic.NET.

The top-level node in a DOM tree is the *document* node. There is only one such node for each document. The organization of child nodes in the document corresponds to the organization of the data in the XML text file. The various child nodes contain the names of the data sections and also the data from the text document.

All nodes have a type. Some common types are shown in [Table 19-1](#).

Table 19-1: Node Types

Node Type	Description
Document	The top-level node in a document. Only one such node exists per DOM tree.
Element	The basic node type. An element corresponds to an XML tag that begins with "<". For example the element named <i>sample</i> begins with "<sample>" and ends with "</sample>".
Attribute	An attribute of a node. It normally has either a document or element as its parent. In XML text, attributes are embedded inside the element name start tag. For example an attribute named <i>color</i> of element <i>sample</i> appears as <sample color="value">.
Text	The data contents of an element or attribute. It holds whatever is between two element tags, or the "value" of an attribute.
CDATA section	A special text node that allows special characters in the data without encoding them. The data starts with "<!CDATA[" and ends with "]>".
Comment	A special text node that contains a comment not considered part of the document data. The comment data begins with "<!--" and ends with "-->".
Processing Instruction	A special text node that contains processor-specific information. The information data begins with "<?" and ends with "?>".

When an XML text document is parsed, GPL creates a new DOM tree in the controller's memory with child nodes that contain all the parsed data. The XML classes and methods that are provided in GPL allow an application program to efficiently access the data contained in the tree. If desired, the data in the tree may be modified and written back out in the XML text format.

In order to create an XML text file, a GPL program must first create a new document tree in the controller's memory and add nodes that contain the desired data. An XML method can then be executed that converts the tree in memory to the XML text format.

Character Representation

This GPL implementation expects all external character data to be encoded in UTF-8. Since 7-bit ASCII characters are a subset of UTF-8, all data will be properly interpreted if you confine your data to the 7-bit ASCII subset.

In addition, XML text files include certain special characters to delimit data sections. The critical characters are " (double quote), & (ampersand), ' (apostrophe), < (less than), and > (greater than). You must not use these characters in any name or data fields when creating tree nodes or setting node values. For efficiency, GPL does not automatically check for these characters or convert them. If you need to use these characters, you can encode them with the method **XmIDoc.EncodeEntities**. If you receive data with encoded entities, you can change them to normal 7-bit ASCII with the method **XmIDoc.DecodeEntities**.

XmIDoc Class

GPL includes an **XmIDoc** class. The objects of this class operate on the top-level of a DOM tree (which contains an entire XML document). The **XmIDoc** methods deal with the document as a whole and, except for a method that allocates new nodes, these methods do not operate on specific nodes in the DOM tree. For example, this class includes the method for converting an XML text file into a DOM tree and a method for the reverse operation.

There is one and only one **XmIDoc** object for each separate XML document that is represented as a DOM tree. An XML DOM tree cannot exist without an **XmIDoc** object. When the last reference to an **XmIDoc** object is freed, the entire DOM tree is also freed. Any **XmINode** objects that refer to nodes in the tree are marked as invalid.

The **XmIDoc** class interface is summarized in [Table 19-2](#). Each of these properties and methods is described in detail in the GPL Dictionary contained in the Software Reference section of the *PreciseFlex Library*.

Table 19-2: XmIDoc Class Interface Summary

XmIDoc Class Member	Type	Description
New	Constructor Method	Creates a new document tree with the specified name.
<code>xmldoc_obj.CreateNode</code>	Method	Returns a new XmINode object for this document with the specified type, and name.

XmlDoc Class Member	Type	Description
XmlDoc.DecodeEntities	Shared Method	Converts a String containing encoded XML entities into raw text.
<i>xmldoc_obj</i> . DocumentElement	Method	Returns the XmlNode element that is the root of the document.
XmlDoc.EncodeEntities	Shared Method	Converts special characters in a String to XML entities.
<i>xmldoc_obj</i> . ErrorCode	Get Property	Returns the last parser error code number, or 0 if no error.
XmlDoc.LoadFile	Shared Method	Loads and parses an XML text document from a file and returns the created XmlDoc DOM tree object.
XmlDoc.LoadString	Shared Method	Parses an XML text document from a String and returns the created XmlDoc DOM tree object.
<i>xmldoc_obj</i> . Message	Get Property	Returns the last parser error message, or "" if no error.
<i>xmldoc_obj</i> . SaveFile	Method	Converts a DOM tree document to the XML text format and writes the data to a file.
<i>xmldoc_obj</i> . SaveString	Method	Converts a DOM tree document to the XML text format and writes the data to a String .

XmlNode Class

GPL includes an **XmlNode** class that provides access to and manipulation of individual nodes within a DOM tree.

XmlNode objects point to DOM nodes but do not actually contain the DOM nodes. When an **XmlNode** object is created or destroyed, the underlying DOM nodes are not affected provided that they are part of a DOM tree. If a DOM node is destroyed by releasing the top-level **XmlDoc** node or by releasing a parent DOM node, the **XmlNode** object is automatically unlinked from the DOM node and any attempt to use the **XmlNode** object results in an error.

Table 19-3 summarizes the properties and methods for the **XmlNode** class. Each of these properties and methods is described in detail in the GPL Dictionary contained in the Software Reference section of the *PreciseFlex Library*.

Table 19-3: XmlNode Class, Properties & Methods

XmlNode Class Member	Type	Description
<i>xmlnode_obj</i> . AddAttribute	Method	Adds an attribute node as a child of this node.
<i>xmlnode_obj</i> . AddElement	Method	Adds an element node as a child of this node. Includes an optional value.
<i>xmlnode_obj</i> . AddElementNode	Method	Adds an element node as a child of this node. Returns an XmlNode object for the new node. Includes an optional value.
<i>xmlnode_obj</i> . AppendChild	Method	Appends a new child node as the last child of this node. Merges text nodes.

XmlNode Class Member	Type	Description
<i>XmlNode</i> . ChildNodeCount	Get Property	Returns the number of children of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . Clone	Method	Returns a clone of this node. Optionally recursively clones the subtree under this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . FirstChild	Method	Returns the first child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . GetAttribute	Method	Returns a String containing the value of the specified attribute that is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . GetAttributeNode	Method	Returns the node corresponding to the specified attribute that is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . GetElement	Method	Returns a String containing the value of the specified element that is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . GetElementNode	Method	Returns the node corresponding to the specified element that is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . HasAttribute	Method	Returns True if the specified attribute is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . HasChildNodes	Get Property	Returns True if the node has any non-attribute child nodes.
<i>XmlNode</i> . HasElement	Method	Returns True if a specified element is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . InsertAfter	Method	Inserts a new node as a child of this node after a referenced child node. Merges text nodes.
<i>XmlNode</i> . InsertBefore	Method	Inserts a new node as a child of this node before a referenced child node. Merges text nodes.
<i>XmlNode</i> . LastChild	Method	Returns the last child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . Name	Get Property	Returns the node name as a String .
<i>XmlNode</i> . NextSibling	Method	Returns the next sibling of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . OwnerDocument	Method	Returns the XmlDoc associated with this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . ParentNode	Method	Returns the parent of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . PreviousSibling	Method	Returns the previous sibling of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . RemoveAttribute	Method	Removes a specified attribute from this node's children.
<i>XmlNode</i> . RemoveChild	Method	Removes a child node from the list of children for this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . RemoveElement	Method	Removes a specified element from this node's children.
<i>XmlNode</i> . ReplaceChild	Method	Replaces an old child node with a new child node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . SetAttribute	Method	Sets the value of an existing specified attribute that is a child of this node.
<i>XmlNode</i> . SetElement	Method	Sets the value of an existing specified element that is a child of this node.

XmlNode Class Member	Type	Description
<i>XmlNode</i> .Type	Get Property	Returns the node type as a String .
<i>XmlNode</i> .Value	Method	Returns the node value as a String or sets the node value.

Examples

Reading an XML file

```
' Input parameter file contains the path to the file to read.  
' Output parameter doc is an XmlDocument variable that receives the  
' parsed XML document that is generated.  
  
Public Sub XmlReadFile(ByVal file As String, ByRef doc As  
XmlDoc)  
    Dim exc As Exception  
    doc = XmlDocument.LoadFile(file)  
    If (doc.ErrorCode <> 0) Then  
        Console.WriteLine("Input error " & CStr(doc.ErrorCode) _  
            & ", " & doc.Message)  
        exc = New Exception  
        exc.ErrorCode = doc.ErrorCode  
        Throw exc  
    End If  
End Sub
```

Writing an XML file

```
' Input parameter file contains the path to the file to write.  
' Input parameter doc is an XmlDocument object that contains the  
' document tree that is converted.  
  
Public Sub XmlWriteFile(ByVal file As String, ByVal doc As  
XmlDoc)  
    Dim exc As Exception  
    Try  
        doc.SaveFile(file)  
    Catch exc  
        If doc.ErrorCode <> 0 Then  
            Console.WriteLine("Output error " & _  
                CStr(doc.ErrorCode) & _  
                ", " & doc.Message)  
        End If  
        Throw exc  
    End Try  
End Sub
```

Accessing data in an XML document tree

Assume we have an XML document tree that was generated from the following XML text:

```
<?xml version="1.0"?>
<procedureControl cellId="TestCell">
  <command>start</command>
  <procedure jobId="090507001" name="INS">
    <type>protocol</type>
    <testSet>INS_#_090507001</testSet>
    <index>0</index>
  </procedure>
</procedureControl>
```

The program below analyzes and displays part of the data contained in the tree.

```
Public Sub XmlParse(ByVal doc As XmlDocument)
  Dim root As XmlNode
  Dim command As XmlNode
  Dim procedure As XmlNode
  Dim attr As XmlNode
  Dim ss As String
  root = doc.DocumentElement
  command = root.GetElementNode("command")
  procedure = root.GetElementNode("procedure")
  ss = root.GetAttribute("cellId")
  Console.WriteLine("cellId = " & ss)
  ss = command.Value
  Console.WriteLine("command = " & ss)
  ss = procedure.GetAttribute("jobId")
  Console.WriteLine("jobId = " & ss)
  ss = procedure.GetElement("type")
  Console.WriteLine("type = " & ss)
  ss = procedure.GetElement("testSet")
  Console.WriteLine("typeSet = " & ss)
End Sub
```

The output produced is:

```
cellId = TestCell
command = start
jobId = 090507001
type = protocol
typeSet = INS_#_090507001
```

Searching for an element in the document

If you do not know the structure of a document, you can search for an element by recursively searching through the tree until you find a match. This method is much slower than looking for an element where you expect to find it.

```
Public Sub XmlSearchTree(ByVal node As XmlNode, _
                        ByVal name As String, _
                        ByRef found As XmlNode)
    Dim child As XmlNode
    found = Nothing
    If node.Name = name Then
        If node.Type = "element" Then
            Console.WriteLine("Found " & name)
            found = node
            Return
        End If
    End If
    child = node.FirstChild
    While Not child Is Nothing
        XmlSearchTree(child, name, found) 'recursive call
        If Not found Is Nothing Then
            Return
        End If
        child = child.NextSibling
    End While
End Sub
```

Creating an XML document from a GPL program

The following program demonstrates how to create the XML document tree that corresponds to the XML text shown above in the third example. If this document is output using the `XmlWriteFile` program, the resulting XML text will be identical in content to the example except for indentation and line breaks.

```
Public Sub XmlCreate(ByRef doc As XmlDocument)
    Dim root As XmlNode
    Dim elem As XmlNode
    doc = New XmlDocument("procedureControl")
    root = doc.DocumentElement
    root.AddAttribute("cellId", "TestCell")
    root.AddElement("command", "start")
    elem = root.AddElementNode("procedure")
    elem.AddAttribute("jobId", "090507001")
    elem.AddAttribute("name", "INS")
    elem.AddElement("type", "protocol")
    elem.AddElement("testSet", "INS_#_090507001")
    elem.AddElement("index", "0")
End Sub
```

Error Handling

Errors that occur while parsing an XML text document to create a DOM tree or that occur while generating XML text from an existing DOM tree are accessed by properties of the associated `XmlDoc` object. The `XmlDoc.ErrorCode` property contains the last error generated by a major XML operation. These operations include the `LoadString` and `SaveString` methods. Typically, such XML methods generate much more detailed error information than is reflected in a simple error

code. If an XML method generates an error, the **XmlDoc Message** method should be examined for additional detailed error information.

For example, the error code -799 "XML error" has a secondary error number associated with it. To determine the meaning of the error, check the **XmlDoc Message** method.

Only severe parsing errors throw an exception, so it is required that the application software test the **ErrorCode** method after the **LoadFile** or **LoadString** methods are executed.

See the individual **XmlNode** dictionary pages for specifics on each method. In general, if a method returns an **XmlNode** value, the value will be set to **Nothing** if an error occurs, otherwise, the method throws an exception.

The error -801 "No XML node" occurs if you attempt to access a GPL XML object that is not associated with any XML tree node. This situation can occur if you have an **XmlNode** object that refers to a node, and then you remove the part of the XML tree that contains that node. For example, this can occur if you release the **XmlDoc** object that contains the entire document or you use the **XmlNode RemoveChild** method for the referenced node or one of its parents.

20. Misc. Unsupported Features

GPL does not support conditional compilation and its associated directives, e.g. `#if`.