

Chop, Length, and Substring

How to use a few string functions in Perl

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There are a few functions to manipulate strings that we haven't covered yet, so this will cover these as they may be useful later when we deal with strings even more. Let's take a look at the chop, length, and substring functions and see what they do.

Chop

The chop function is used to "chop off" the last character of a string variable. This is commonly used to take the "\n" newline character off a string when you read it from a file (we'll get to reading files in a later section). The reason for this is that when you write information to a file, the end of each line has a newline character added so that the line will break. Suppose you had a simple file such as:

```
me
myself
I
```

If you had read the "me" line in and assigned it to a variable, say `$who_am_I`, the value you have for it would actually be:

```
me\n
```

To get rid of the \n character, you use the chop function with the variable name (in this case, `$who_am_I`) you assigned to the string:

```
chop ($who_am_I);
```

After that command is run, your variable will then have just the value "me". Remembering this later will be very helpful when you read from files and need a specific string value.

Length

The length function simply gives you back the number of characters in a string variable. This is handy when you don't know the value of the variable but would like to know the number of characters it has. It is useful with arrays, conditional statements, loops, and such things.

So, if you had a variable named `$ice` and its value was the string "cold", you could get the length of the string "cold" with the length function:

```
$ice="cold";
```

```
$length_ice = length ($ice);
```

Since the string "cold" has 4 characters, the value of the \$length_ice variable will be 4, and you can use it for other calculations or conditions.

Substring (substr)

The substring function is a way to get a portion of a string value, rather than using the entire value. The value can then be used in a loop or a conditional statement, or just for its own purposes. For this one, you will probably want the general form of the function first. The function is usually set to a variable so that the variable contains the value of the substring:

```
$portion = substr($string_variable, start number, length);
```

Your \$string_variable will be the variable from which you wish to create the substring. The start number is the character within the string from which you want to start your substring. Remember, though- the first number in a string here is zero rather than 1, so be careful when you make the count. The length above is the amount of characters you wish to take out of the string.

So, if we had a variable named \$ice with a value of "cold", but we wanted to get the last three characters rather than the full string, we would write something like this:

```
$ice="cold";
$page = substr($ice, 1, 3);
print "It sure is $ice out here today.";
print "I wonder if I am $age enough to play in the snow?";
```

Yes, the substring turns out to be "old". It starts at the second character (which is 1 since the string starts with zero), and uses the next 3 characters. This function can be quite handy when you are trying to get part of a string later.

Well, that's it for now. Let's go on to: [Reading from Files](#).

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