

FoxRockX

Try Thor's Terrific Tools, Part 1

Thor makes developers' lives easier with dozens of handy tools.

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Thor provides dozens of great tools to make developing in VFP easier. In this series, Tamar takes a look at her favorites.

One of the things that makes Visual FoxPro such a great tool for developing software is the open architecture that makes it easy to create developer tools. It's rare to find an experienced VFP developer who hasn't written at least one tool to automate some task in the IDE. Some people have a whole menu pad's worth of developer tools (and in fact, being able to add a menu pad is one example of VFP's open architecture).

The VFPX website was created to allow VFP developers to share tools, and it now houses quite a few developer tools (along with a bunch of components meant to be used in VFP apps). But it's not a great way to share little tools. What's a little tool? Something that takes just a few lines of code, perhaps with no user interaction needed. Something where creating a whole VFPX project would be overkill.

As the VFPX tool PEM Editor was reaching maturity, Jim Nelson and Matt Slay, its principal authors and designers, found that there were lots of little tools they wanted and they started adding them to PEM Editor. But many of these little tools weren't really relevant to managing properties,

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events and methods of forms and classes. PEM Editor just proved to be a handy way of distributing them.

Eventually, they realized that what was really needed was a tool for managing tools, and Thor was born. Thor is a tool designed to let you manage developer tools; it comes with a whole set of tools, but is extensible so you can add your own developer tools, as well as those you get from others. Thor allows you to assign hot keys to any installed tool, as well as to create custom pads on the VFP menu and custom pop-up menus accessed by hot keys. (For a longer introduction to Thor, see Rick Schummer's article in the July, 2011 issue of FoxRockX. To learn how to add your own tools to Thor, see Rick's September, 2011 article.)

In this short series of articles, I'll look at a number of the tools that come with Thor to show you why you want to bother changing the way you work. Since most of the tools operate on code in the IDE, I'll need to demonstrate on some programs, forms and classes. As much as possible, I'll use code that comes with VFP, such as classes from the FFC (FoxPro Foundation Classes).

For each tool, I'll also show you where it's located on the Thor Tools menu.

Highlight Control Structure

Menu: Code | Control Structures | Highlight Control Structure

I work a lot with other people's code, that is, code originally written by another developer. Sometimes, even beautifying the code isn't enough to help me grasp its structure. Thor's Highlight Control Structure tool is handy when I'm looking at a particular code block and trying to understand it. It highlights the entire structure where the cursor is found, whether it's IF-ENDIF, FOR-ENDFOR, DO CASE, SCAN-ENDSCAN, DO WHILE, TEXT-ENDTEXT or TRY-CATCH. If you run the tool a second time, it highlights the structure containing the one you already highlighted. Subsequent uses continue to work their way outward.

For example, **Figure 1** shows a block of code from VFPXTAB.PRG. The cursor is positioned on an assignment statement that's inside an IF block (between "ISNULL" and its open parenthesis). The IF block is inside a CASE statement, which is contained in a FOR loop. The FOR loop is inside a SCAN loop.

```
SCAN
* Sum the relevant fields
m.gtotal = .NULL.
FOR i = 2 TO FCOUNT() - 1
  IF ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    LOOP
  ENDIF
  IF ISNULL(m.gtotal) AND !ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    gtotal = 0
  ENDIF
  DO CASE
  CASE THIS.totaltype = COUNT_FIELDS
    * Count values
    IF THIS.shownulls
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i))),0,1)
    ELSE
      cTmpField = field(m.i)
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
    ENDIF
  OTHERWISE
    * SUM values
    gtotal = m.gtotal + EVAL(FIELD(m.i))
  ENDCASE
ENDFOR
IF THIS.totaltype = PERCENT_FIELDS
  gtotal = IIF(m.sumallflds=0 OR ISNULL(m.gtotal) OR m.gtotal=0,0,ROUND(m.gtotal,2))
ENDIF
REPLACE (m.totfldname) WITH m.gtotal
ENDSCAN
```

Figure 1. This block of code, drawn from VFPXTAB.PRG, has an IF inside a CASE, inside a FOR loop, inside a SCAN loop.

Figure 2 shows the result of using Highlight Control Structure, while **Figure 3** shows the code after the second application of Highlight Control Structure. Using the tool a third time would high-

light the entire FOR loop, and a fourth use highlights the whole SCAN. In fact, this entire block of code is inside another IF statement, and a fifth use of Highlight Control Structure highlights that IF.

```
SCAN
* Sum the relevant fields
m.gtotal = .NULL.
FOR i = 2 TO FCOUNT() - 1
  IF ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    LOOP
  ENDIF
  IF ISNULL(m.gtotal) AND !ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    gtotal = 0
  ENDIF
  DO CASE
  CASE THIS.totaltype = COUNT_FIELDS
    * Count values
    IF THIS.shownulls
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i))),0,1)
    ELSE
      cTmpField = field(m.i)
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
    ENDIF
  OTHERWISE
    * SUM values
    gtotal = m.gtotal + EVAL(FIELD(m.i))
  ENDCASE
ENDFOR
IF THIS.totaltype = PERCENT_FIELDS
  gtotal = IIF(m.sumallflds=0 OR ISNULL(m.gtotal) OR m.gtotal=0,0,ROUND(m.gtotal,2))
ENDIF
REPLACE (m.totfldname) WITH m.gtotal
ENDSCAN
```

Figure 2. Using Highlight Control Structure on the code in Figure 1. This block of code, drawn from VFPXTAB.PRG, has an IF inside a CASE, inside a FOR loop, inside a SCAN loop. Highlights just the IF statement where the cursor was positioned.

```
SCAN
* Sum the relevant fields
m.gtotal = .NULL.
FOR i = 2 TO FCOUNT() - 1
  IF ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    LOOP
  ENDIF
  IF ISNULL(m.gtotal) AND !ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i)))
    gtotal = 0
  ENDIF
  DO CASE
  CASE THIS.totaltype = COUNT_FIELDS
    * Count values
    IF THIS.shownulls
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i))),0,1)
    ELSE
      cTmpField = field(m.i)
      gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
    ENDIF
  OTHERWISE
    * SUM values
    gtotal = m.gtotal + EVAL(FIELD(m.i))
  ENDCASE
ENDFOR
IF THIS.totaltype = PERCENT_FIELDS
  gtotal = IIF(m.sumallflds=0 OR ISNULL(m.gtotal) OR m.gtotal=0,0,ROUND(m.gtotal,2))
ENDIF
REPLACE (m.totfldname) WITH m.gtotal
ENDSCAN
```

Figure 3. The second use of Highlight Control Structure highlights the entire CASE statement.

Of course, if you have to drill down through three layers of menus to use this tool, it probably won't seem all that handy. However, one of the features of Thor is that you can assign a keyboard shortcut to any tool. Before moving on to look at other tools, let's see how you can do so.

Putting tools at your fingertips

Thor offers several mechanisms to make using its tools easier. The simplest is assigning a keystroke combination to a tool, so you can use it without navigating the Thor Tools menu. To do so, open the Thor Configuration form by choosing Thor | Configure from the menu. Click the Tool Definitions tab to open the Tool Definitions page, and navigate in the treeview on the left pane until you find the tool to which you want to add a hotkey. **Figure 4** shows the Tool Definitions page with the Highlight Control Structure tool selected.

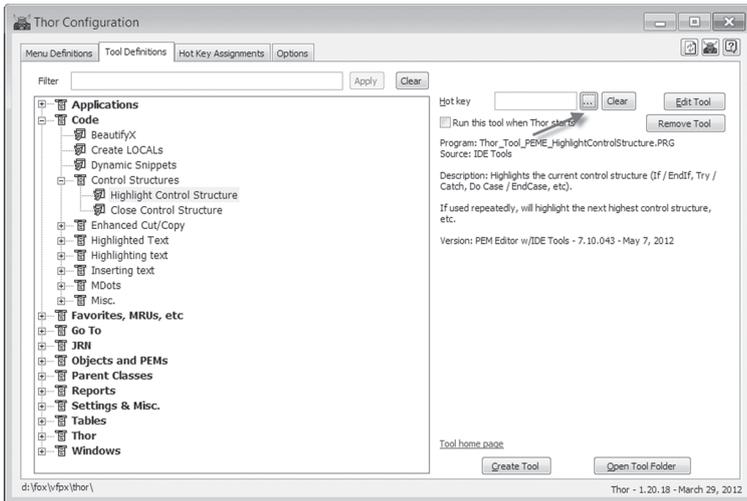


Figure 4. The Tool Definitions page of the Thor Configuration form lets you specify a keyboard combination to run a tool.

Click the ellipsis button (indicated in the figure) and then, as the message that appears (Figure 5) says, press the keyboard combination you want to use. Once you do so, the message disappears, and the textbox shows the specified hotkey. In Figure 6, you can see that I've specified Shift+Ctrl+C as the hot key for Highlight Control Structure (described in the next section of this article).

The key combination you specify doesn't take effect until you either close the Thor Configuration form or click the Thor button at the top right of the form to refresh menus and hot keys.

The Thor Configuration form offers a couple of other ways to make individual tools more accessible. You can modify the VFP system menu, adding entire pads, add-

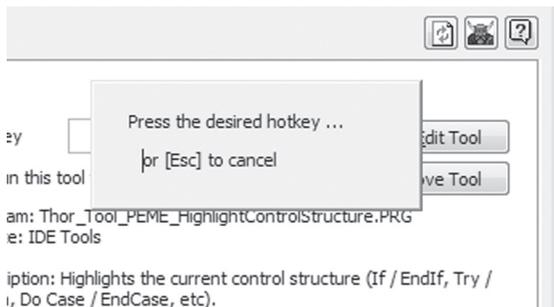


Figure 5. After you click the ellipsis button for a hot key, this message appears. Do as it says to specify a hot key.

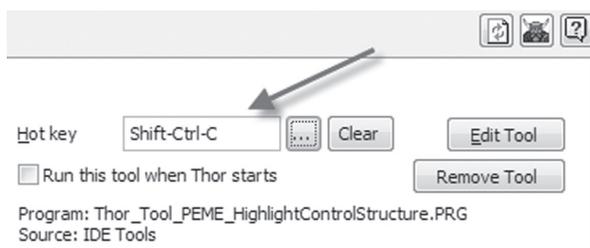


Figure 6. Once you type the desired key combination, it appears in the hot key textbox.

ing submenus to the existing pads or adding tools directly to existing pads. So if you like using the menu, but find that the tools you want to use are buried too deeply in the Thor Tools menu, you can put them where you want them.

In addition, you can create pop-up menus that appear when a specified key combination is pressed. These are like right-click menus, except that they're triggered by the key combination you specify. These pop-up menus can include whichever tools you choose, and can have submenus, if you wish.

To modify the VFP system menu or to create a pop-up menu, use the Menu Definitions page of the Thor Configuration form. Figure 7 shows that page after clicking the Add Menu button with the Pop-up Menus

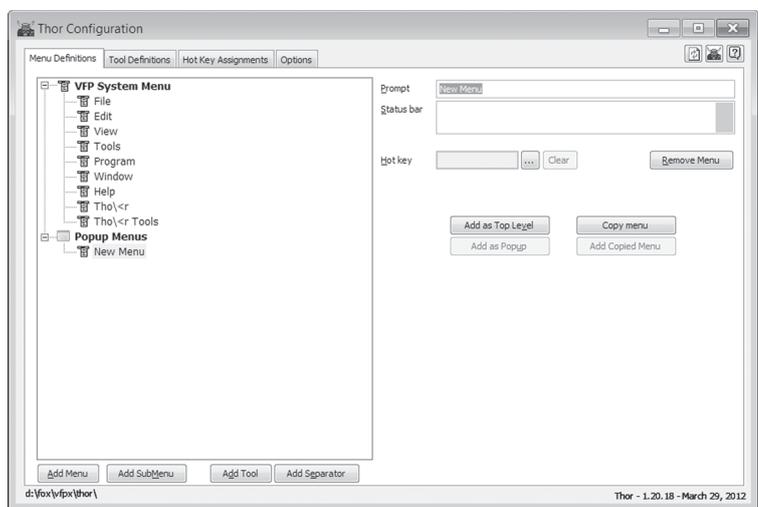


Figure 7. On the Menu Definitions page of the Thor Configuration form, you can add items to the VFP system menu, and create your own pop-up menus.

item highlighted. To define the pop-up menu, specify the prompt (which appears only in the Thor Configuration form) and a hotkey for the pop-up. Then, use the Add Tool button to add one or more tools to the pop-up menu.

In Figure 8, the new pop-up menu has been defined and Thor's two tools that deal with control structures added. Figure 9 shows the newly defined pop-up over a code window.

The ability to add hot keys, to modify the VFP system menu, and to define pop-up menus makes it easy for you to decide which Thor tools you're likely to use and then make those easily accessible.

Edit Parent and Containing Classes

Menu: Parent Classes | Edit Parent and Containing Classes

This tool may well be the one most likely to get people to use Thor. One of VFP's weaknesses is that when you're editing a form or class, you can-

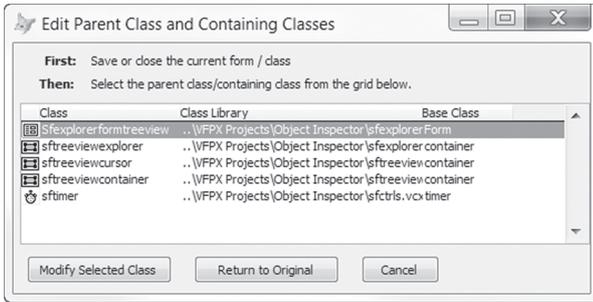


Figure 12. This time, one of the timers inside the sfTreeViewExplorer was selected when this tool was run.

in an object's heritage. The answer is that the tool doesn't trace the inheritance hierarchy for containing classes. What it does is show you every class in that hierarchy that contains the specified object. So, in this example, sfContainer doesn't include the timer; it was added to sfTreeViewContainer, and then inherited by that class's subclasses, sfTreeViewCursor and sfTreeViewExplorer.

As the instructions at the top of the form indicate, before I can open any of those classes, I have to close the Inspector form. But then, I can choose a class and click Modify Selected Class to open it. Once I've finished editing and closed the Class Designer, I can click Return to Original to reopen the Inspector form exactly as I left it.

Create Locals

Menu: Code | Create LOCALS

I've always known that declaring all the variables used in a routine is a best practice, and since Fox-Pro morphed into VFP, that declaring all variables local is the best choice. But the importance of the declarations was really brought home to me by one project. It involved a VFP application that provided a user interface, but also instantiated a VFP COM object. The COM object had a timer, and when the timer fired, the COM object could call methods of the main application's application object. Of course, those calls interrupted whatever was going on in the main application.

While testing this code, we ran into some very weird errors with code working most of the time, but every so often, behaving quite strangely. Eventually, we realized that many of the problems were due to having undeclared variables (which, by default, are private rather than local). The routines called by the timer code used some of the same variable names, and when the variables weren't local, actually changed the values of the variables in the routine that was interrupted by the timer. Once we ensured that every variable in every method was declared local, many of the problems went away.

If only I'd had Thor back then. Thor's Create Locals tool takes any code editing window and adds the necessary local declarations. **Figure 13** shows a little block of code (that dumps the list of forms in a project into a cursor); it uses several variables, but none of them are declared.

Figure 14 shows the same block of code after running the Create Locals tool; the arrow points to the local declarations.

You can control some aspects of this tool's behavior using the Options tab of the Thor Configuration tool.

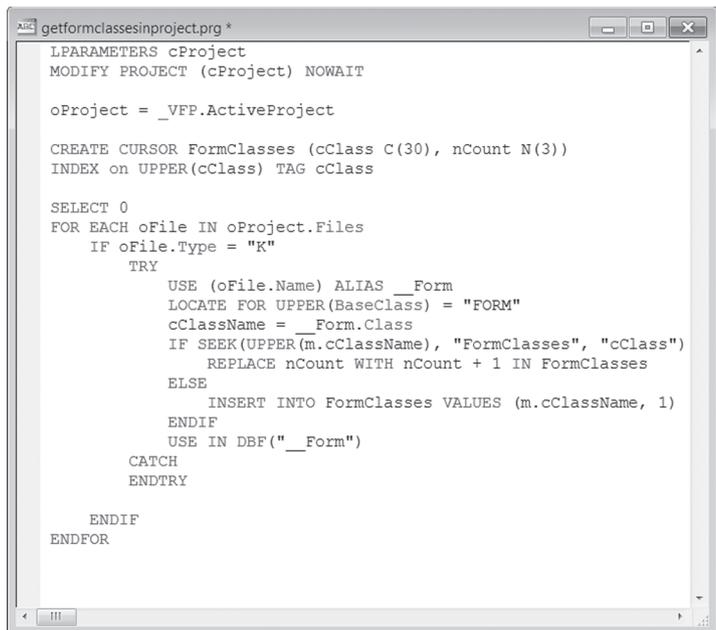


Figure 13. This block of code uses several undeclared variables.

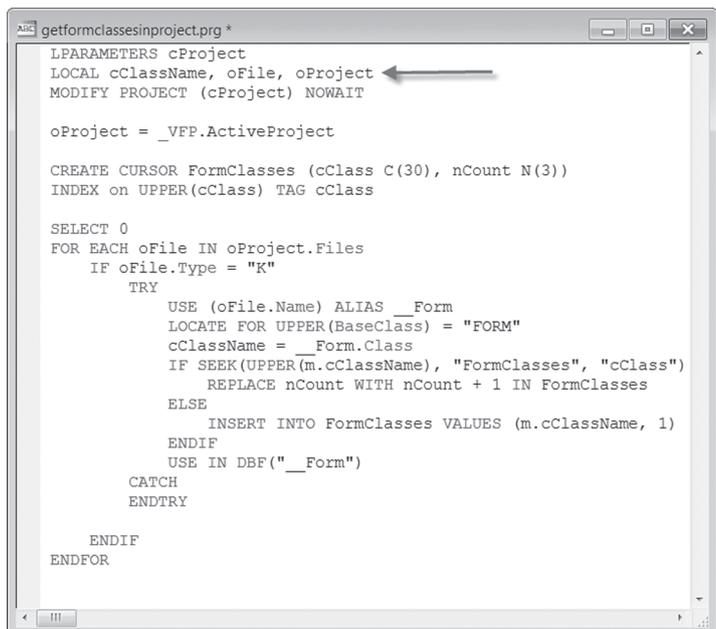


Figure 14. After running the Create Locals tool, the same block has variable declarations.

Figure 15 shows the Options tab with settings for Create Locals displayed, and Figure 16 shows the choices in the Selection of variables dropdown. That dropdown lets you indicate whether all variables should be declared or only those whose names begin with a lowercase “l,” the prefix used for local variables in the Hungarian naming convention. Since I use a different naming convention (prefixing variables with their type, but not with “l”), I prefer the “All variables, merged” option.

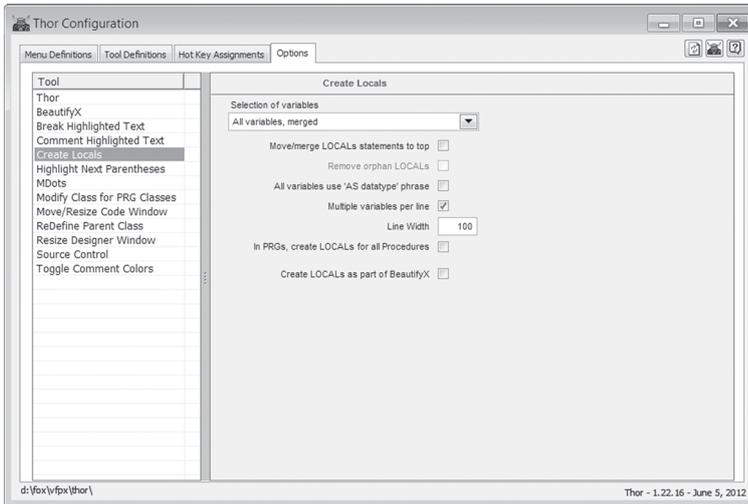


Figure 15. This page lets you determine how the Create Locals tool behaves.

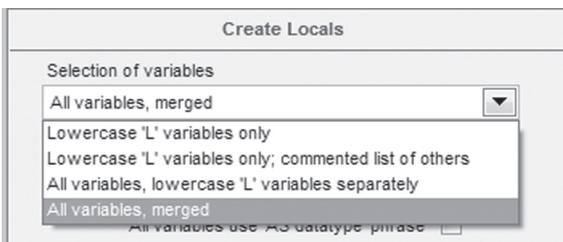


Figure 16. Create Locals can apply to only a subset of variables, based on their names.

Most of the other choices should be self-explanatory, or easily understood with a little testing. The last checkbox, Create LOCALs as part of BeautifyX, determines whether local declarations are added when using the BeautifyX tool, which is a replacement for VFP’s native Beautify.

If, even after trying different settings, you don’t like the way the local declarations are created, Thor offers you the ultimate flexibility. You can create your own version of the code for the tool. To do so, choose More | Manage Plug-Ins from the Thor menu. In the form that appears, find CreateLocalsStatements and click the Create button next to it. That opens a program containing the current code used to actually create the local declarations. You can modify it and save it (it’s automatically stored in the right place), and from then on, the tool will use your modified version.

Add MDots to variable names

Menu: Code | MDots | Add MDots to variable names

As with declaring all variables local, I’ve known for years that all accesses of a variable should be preceded by “m.” (often written as “MDot”) to ensure that VFP looks at the variable rather than at a field of the same name. In fact, increasingly, I remember to put them in my code, but I still forget sometimes. This Thor tool catches all the places I missed.

Figure 17 shows a block of code that doesn’t use the MDot notation. Figure 18 shows the same code after using this tool. A couple of the changes have been circled.

By default, this tool adds MDots a few places where they’re not necessary, such as on the left-hand side of assignment statements. However, you can control this behavior using the Options tab of the Thor Configuration form, shown in Figure 19. Figure 20 shows the same block of code when using the tool as configured in Figure 19.

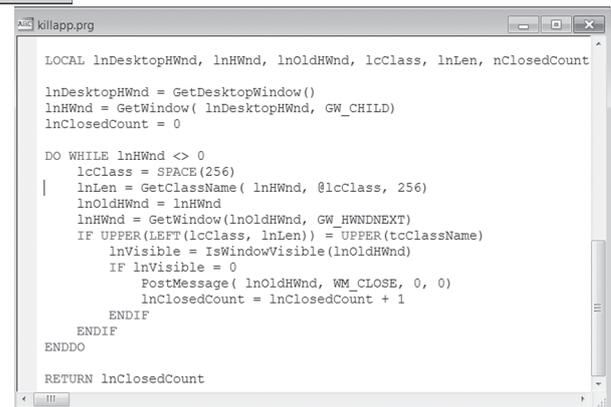


Figure 17. This code doesn’t use the MDOT notation to prevent conflicts between variables and field names.

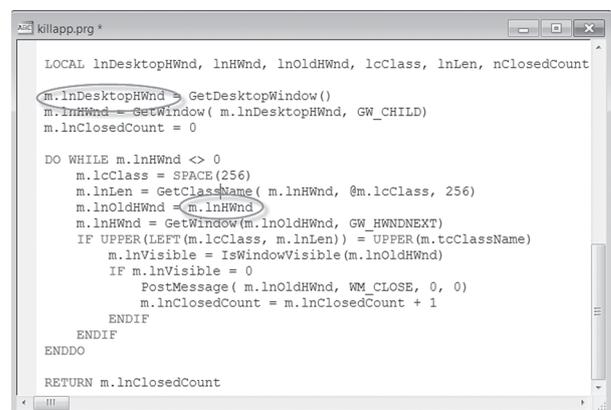


Figure 18. After using the Add MDot to variable names tool, the code from Figure 17 has “m.” before all references to variables.

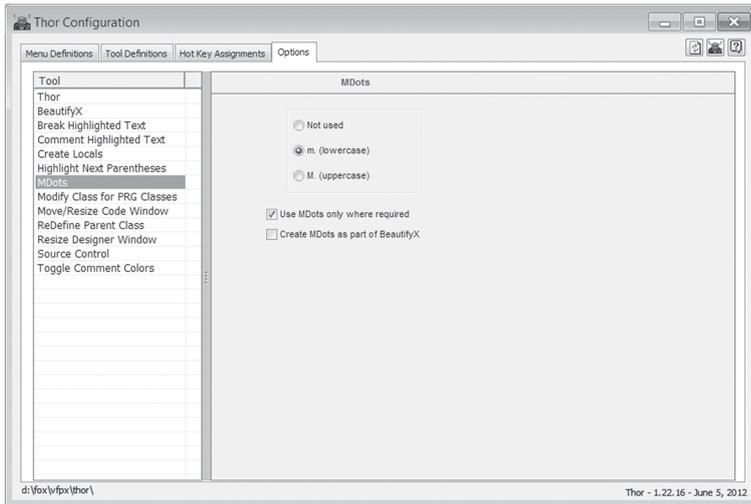


Figure 19. Thor offers options for various tools. Here, you can determine whether the Add MDots tool uses lower-case or upper-case and whether it puts MDots in front of all uses of variables or only those where it's required to avoid conflict with field names.

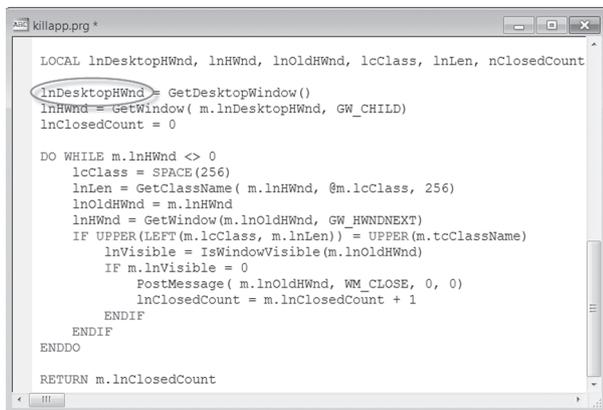


Figure 20. After changing the option to include MDots only where required, variables on the left-hand side of an assignment statement no longer get the MDot prefix.

Highlight Parentheses

Menu: Code | Highlighting text | Highlight parentheses

This is another tool that's especially handy when I'm exploring code written by someone else or old code I haven't seen in a while. It's also great for those times when I'm getting a syntax error and can't see what's wrong. When you run this tool, it looks both ways from the cursor position to find a matching pair of parentheses and highlights the matching parentheses and all the code in between.

Figure 21 shows a line of code with nested parentheses; the cursor is inside the inner block. **Figure 22** shows the same block after using the tool.

```
cTmpField = field(m.i)
gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
__
```

Figure 21. The cursor here is inside parentheses.

```
cTmpField = field(m.i)
gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
__
```

Figure 22. Highlight parentheses finds the first containing pair of parentheses and highlights the contained code.

Like Highlight Control Structure, using this tool repeatedly moves outward; **Figure 23** shows the same block of code after using the tool twice. Oddly, if there are no more pairs of parentheses containing the highlighted code, the tool highlights all the code in the editing window.

Highlight parentheses is smart enough to get things right when the matching pair of parentheses contains other parentheses. For example, in **Figure 24**, the cursor is positioned on the FIELD() function, but not inside its parentheses. **Figure 25** shows the result of using the tool. The correct pairing is found.

```
cTmpField = field(m.i)
gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISBLANK(&cTmpField),0,1)
__
```

Figure 23. Each subsequent use of Highlight parentheses moves out by one pair of parentheses.

```
IF THIS.shownulls
    gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i))),0,1)
ELSE
```

Figure 24. Here, the cursor's initial position isn't in the innermost pair of parentheses.

```
IF THIS.shownulls
    gtotal = m.gtotal + IIF(ISNULL(EVAL(FIELD(m.i))),0,1)
ELSE
```

Figure 25. The Highlight parentheses tool gets it right, even when the initial cursor position isn't inside the innermost parentheses.

More to come

In my next article, I'll look at some more Thor tools, including several that make refactoring easier.

Author Profile

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