Tip-a-day mode

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For the next several weeks, I'll be giving a tip about writing in C every other day. People seem to like the tip-a-day sort of format, so I thought I'd try it out for a while.

When I type `c tutorial` into a search engine, most[1] of the top[2] hits[3] are from somewhere in the mid-1990s. They're not obsolete in the sense that everything they say is still correct, but in the last fifteen years or so, coding style and custom—and the C language itself—have changed.

This makes me sad, because C is a spiffy, awesome, moderner-than-modern language, and we shouldn't let tutorials copyright 1987 drag it back to the mainframe era. These tips assume that you've already read these tutorials and/or somehow picked up the basics of C. You can write C using about a dozen and a half keywords, so it's not rocket science. These tips will show you how to get around the awkward bits and use C like a modern, script-like language, with less overhead and fewer calls to `malloc`.

There are a lot tweet-length tip-a-day setups out there (A Mr. Cook[4] has about a dozen), but these are here on the blog so I'll have room to give detail, backstory, and running sample programs. Don't worry—none of them will take more than a minutes or two to absorb.

If you want some starter content, maybe start with a (longer than tip-length) post from last week, about curly braces and scope (Entry #047).

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[1] http://einstein.drexel.edu/courses/Comp_Phys/General/C_basics/
[2] http://www.iu.hio.no/~mark/CTutorial/CTutorial.html
[3] http://www.cprogramming.com/tutorial/c/lesson1.html
[4] http://www.johndcook.com/twitter/