

The `fpurge()` function specifically erases text waiting to be read. I have noticed that it's required for Unix, Linux, and Mac OS programs.

“Can I get `getchar()` to read only one character?”

Alas, the `getchar()` function isn't a keyboard-reading function *per se*. What it really does is read standard input, which for nearly all computers I have used is text typed at the keyboard.

To read the keyboard, you need a specific function. Some versions of GCC for Windows use the `getch()` and `getche()` functions, which can read text directly from the keyboard and lack the standard input problems of `getchar()`. The problem with illustrating these functions in this book is that they don't have a Unix counterpart.

To read the keyboard directly in Unix, you have to access the *terminal* being used and then interpret which keyboard codes are being generated. Another solution is to use the Curses programming library.

Alas, this book doesn't have room to describe all these keyboard-reading functions. Instead, I recommend that you pick up this book's companion, *C All-in-One Desk Reference For Dummies* (Wiley).

Meanwhile, back to the GREATER problem

Now that you may have ironed out the problem with `getchar()` in the GREATER program, it's time to examine the output. Run the program again, just for old time's sake. Try to see whether the '-' character is greater than the '\$'.

```
Which character is greater?  
Type a single character:-  
  
Type another character:$  
'-' is greater than '$'!
```

And, why is that?

You see, the `if` command doesn't know squat about letters, numbers, or symbols. Rather than compare the character's physique, `if` compares the character's corresponding ASCII code values.