

Temporary Naming Convention for Software, version 1.1

By **R. G. Sparber**

Protected by Creative Commons.¹

When I first starting writing software, there were times when I needed temporary labels. For example, consider the case of needing to swap values between two variables. Say $A = 1$ and $B = 2$. I need a temporary place to store the value of A while I move the numbers around:

```
TP = A (so temporary place holds 1)
A = B (the contents of A has been replaced with 2)
B = TP (B now holds the old value of A)
```

It didn't matter what I called these temporary places but random naming had gotten me in trouble. I might have "junk", "junk1", etc. Then later I forgot I used these names and reuse them which caused a bug.

Consider the case of putting an important value in TP. A few lines later I use the above code to swap A and B . Then later on I want to retrieve that important value. But it has been replaced with the original contents of A so I created a bug.

Now, in all fairness, that important value should have been assigned to a name that gives a hint to its meaning. Although it takes more typing, a name like "ActiveZone" will be a lot more helpful when you have to look at this code in the future.

Many decades ago a rather smart programmer told me that a family of temporary names have already been defined. In fact, they have been printed on my keyboard! All I need to do was write down the first letter of each name and I wouldn't assign the same one twice.

¹ This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.



The first name is "qaz", the second is "wsx". I suspect it won't take you long to locate the third one, "edc". You get seven names with three letters each and two names with two

letters. I've never needed more than four names. Problem solved.

Another use for these unique names is for getting around a large text document. I placed "qaz" next to my Requirements title, "wsx" next to my flowchart, etc. Since none of these three letter names are part of real words, they are fast and easy to locate with a search.

I welcome your comments and questions.

If you wish to be contacted each time I publish an article, email me with just "Article Alias" in the subject line.

Rick Sparber
Rgsparber.ha@gmail.com
Rick.Sparber.org