

# On the abuse of properties

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January 3, 2006



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One thing that I see occasionally is the abuse of property syntax. IDispatch and CLR objects (and C++ objects if you want to avail yourself of [a Microsoft-specific extension](#)) support “properties”, which syntactically look like fields but internally are treated as a pair of methods (“get” and “put”). An important principle is that given an object `o` and a property `p`, the lines

```
(void)o.p;  
o.p = o.p;
```

should be effectively nops. (Mind you, they might be really inefficient nops.)

My favorite (or perhaps most hated) example of violating this principle is an object I saw many years ago that had a “print” property, which if set to true, caused the object to send itself to the printer. If you did

```
o.print = true;  
o.print = true;
```

then two copies of the object were printed.

Property syntax mimics field syntax for a reason: Properties should behave like fields.

(Plenty more guidance on properties can be found in the [.NET Framework Property Usage Guidelines](#).)

[While Raymond was on vacation, [the autopilot stopped working](#) due to [a power outage](#). This entry has been backdated.]

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