
luacheck Documentation

Release 0.8.0

Peter Melnichenko

July 17, 2015

1	List of warnings	3
1.1	Global variables	4
1.2	Unused variables and values	4
1.3	Shadowing declarations	5
1.4	Control flow and data flow issues	5
2	Command line interface	7
2.1	Command line options	8
2.2	Patterns	10
3	Configuration file	11
3.1	Config options	11
3.2	Per-prefix overrides	12
4	Luacheck module	13
4.1	Report format	13

Contents:

List of warnings

Warnings produced by Luacheck are categorized using three-digit warning codes. Warning codes can be displayed in CLI output using `--codes` CLI option or `code` config option.

Code	Description
111	Setting an undefined global variable.
112	Mutating an undefined global variable.
113	Accessing an undefined global variable.
121	Setting a read-only global variable.
122	Mutating a read-only global variable.
131	Unused implicitly defined global variable.
211	Unused local variable.
212	Unused argument.
213	Unused loop variable.
221	Local variable is accessed but never set.
231	Local variable is set but never accessed.
232	An argument is set but never accessed.
233	Loop variable is set but never accessed.
311	Value assigned to a local variable is unused.
312	Value of an argument is unused.
313	Value of a loop variable is unused.
321	Accessing uninitialized local variable.
411	Redefining a local variable.
412	Redefining an argument.
413	Redefining a loop variable.
421	Shadowing a local variable.
422	Shadowing an argument.
423	Shadowing a loop variable.
511	Unreachable code.
512	Loop can be executed at most once.
521	Unused label.
531	Left-hand side of an assignment is too short.
532	Left-hand side of an assignment is too long.
541	An empty <code>do end</code> block.
542	An empty <code>if</code> branch.

1.1 Global variables

For each file, Luacheck builds list of defined globals which can be used there. By default only globals from Lua standard library are defined; custom globals can be added using `--globals` CLI option or `globals` config option, and version of standard library can be selected using `--std` CLI option or `std` config option. When an undefined global is set, mutated or accessed, Luacheck produces a warning.

1.1.1 Read-only globals

By default, all standard globals except `_G` and `package` are marked as read-only, so that setting or mutating them produces a warning. Custom read-only globals can be added using `--read-globals` CLI option or `read_globals` config option.

1.1.2 Implicitly defined globals

Luacheck can be configured to consider globals assigned under some conditions to be defined implicitly. When `-d/--allow_defined` CLI option or `allow_defined` config option is used, all assignments to globals define them; when `-t/--allow_defined_top` CLI option or `allow_defined_top` config option is used, assignments to globals in the top level function scope (also known as main chunk) define them. A warning is produced when an implicitly defined global is not accessed anywhere.

1.1.3 Modules

Files can be marked as modules using `-m/--module` CLI option or `module` config option to simulate semantics of the deprecated `module` function. Globals implicitly defined inside a module are considered part of its interface, are not visible outside and are not reported as unused. Assignments to other globals are not allowed, even to defined ones.

1.2 Unused variables and values

Luacheck generates warnings for all unused local variables except one named `_`. It also detects variables which are set but never accessed or accessed but never set.

1.2.1 Unused values and uninitialized variables

For each value assigned to a local variable, Luacheck computes set of expressions where it could be used. Warnings are produced for unused values (when a value can't be used anywhere) and for accessing uninitialized variables (when no values can reach an expression). E.g. in the following snippet value assigned to `foo` on line 1 is unused, and variable `bar` is uninitialized on line 9:

```
1 local foo = expr1()
2 local bar
3
4 if condition() then
5     foo = expr2()
6     bar = expr3()
7 else
8     foo = expr4()
9     print(bar)
10 end
```



```

11
12 return foo, bar

```

1.2.2 Secondary values and variables

Unused value assigned to a local variable is secondary if its origin is the last item on the RHS of assignment, and another value from that item is used. Secondary values typically appear when result of a function call is put into locals, and only some of them are later used. For example, here value assigned to `b` is secondary, value assigned to `c` is used, and value assigned to `a` is simply unused:

```

1 local a, b, c = f(), g()
2
3 return c

```

A variable is secondary if all values assigned to it are secondary. In the snippet above, `b` is a secondary variable.

Warnings related to unused secondary values and variables can be removed using `-s/--no-unused-secondaries` CLI option or `unused_secondaries` config option.

1.3 Shadowing declarations

Luacheck detects declarations of local variables shadowing previous declarations in the same closure, unless the variable is named `_`. If the previous declaration is in the same scope as the new one, it is called redefining.

Note that it is **not** necessary to define a new local variable when overwriting an argument:

```

1 local function f(x)
2     local x = x or "default" -- bad
3 end
4
5 local function f(x)
6     x = x or "default" -- good
7 end

```

1.4 Control flow and data flow issues

- Unreachable code and loops that can be executed at most once (e.g. due to an unconditional break);
- Unused labels;
- Unbalanced assignments;
- Empty blocks.

Command line interface

luacheck program accepts files, directories and [rockspecs](#) as arguments.

- Given a file, luacheck will check it.
- Given `-`, luacheck will check stdin.
- Given a directory, luacheck will check all files with `.lua` extension within it. This feature requires [luafilesystem](#) (installed automatically if LuaRocks was used to install Luacheck).
- Given a rockspec (a file with `.rockspec` extension), luacheck will check all files with `.lua` extension mentioned in the rockspec in `build.install.lua`, `build.install.bin` and `build.modules` tables.

The output of luacheck consists of separate reports for each checked file and ends with a summary:

```
$ luacheck src
Checking src/bad_code.lua                               Failure

src/bad_code.lua:3:16: unused variable helper
src/bad_code.lua:3:23: unused variable length argument
src/bad_code.lua:7:10: setting non-standard global variable embrace
src/bad_code.lua:8:10: variable opt was previously defined as an argument on line 7
src/bad_code.lua:9:11: accessing undefined variable hepler

Checking src/good_code.lua                               OK
Checking src/python_code.lua                             Syntax error
Checking src/unused_code.lua                             Failure

src/unused_code.lua:3:18: unused argument baz
src/unused_code.lua:4:8: unused loop variable i
src/unused_code.lua:5:13: unused variable q
src/unused_code.lua:7:11: unused loop variable a
src/unused_code.lua:7:14: unused loop variable b
src/unused_code.lua:7:17: unused loop variable c
src/unused_code.lua:13:7: value assigned to variable x is unused
src/unused_code.lua:14:1: value assigned to variable x is unused
src/unused_code.lua:22:1: value assigned to variable z is unused

Total: 14 warnings / 1 error in 4 files
```

luacheck exits with 0 if no warnings or errors occurred and with a positive number otherwise.

2.1 Command line options

Short options that do not take an argument can be combined into one, so that `-qqqu` is equivalent to `-q -q -q -u`. For long options, both `--option value` or `--option=value` can be used.

Options taking several arguments can be used several times; `--ignore foo --ignore bar` is equivalent to `--ignore foo bar`.

Note that options that may take several arguments, such as `--globals`, should not be used immediately before positional arguments; given `--globals foo bar file.lua`, `luacheck` will consider all `foo`, `bar` and `file.lua` global and then panic as there are no file names left.

Option	Meaning
<code>-g --no-global</code>	Filter out warnings related to global variables.
<code>-u --no-unused</code>	Filter out warnings related to unused variables and values.
<code>-r --no-redefined</code>	Filter out warnings related to redefined variables.
<code>-a --no-unused-args</code>	Filter out warnings related to unused arguments and loop variables.
<code>-v --no-unused-values</code>	Filter out warnings related to unused values.
<code>--no-unset</code>	Filter out warnings related to unset variables.
<code>-s --no-unused-secondaries</code>	Filter out warnings related to unused variables set together with used ones. See <i>Secondary values and variables</i>
<code>--std <std></code>	Set standard globals. <std> must be one of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <code>_G</code> - globals of the Lua interpreter <code>luacheck</code> runs on (default); • <code>lua51</code> - globals of Lua 5.1; • <code>lua52</code> - globals of Lua 5.2; • <code>lua52c</code> - globals of Lua 5.2 compiled with <code>LUA_COMPAT_ALL</code>; • <code>lua53</code> - globals of Lua 5.3; • <code>lua53c</code> - globals of Lua 5.3 compiled with <code>LUA_COMPAT_5_2</code>; • <code>luajit</code> - globals of LuaJIT 2.0; • <code>min</code> - intersection of globals of Lua 5.1, Lua 5.2 and LuaJIT 2.0; • <code>max</code> - union of globals of Lua 5.1, Lua 5.2 and LuaJIT 2.0; • <code>none</code> - no standard globals.
<code>--globals [<global>] ...</code>	Add custom globals on top of standard ones.
<code>--read-globals [<global>] ...</code>	Add read-only globals.
<code>--new-globals [<global>] ...</code>	Set custom globals. Removes custom globals added previously.
<code>--new-read-globals [<global>] ...</code>	Set read-only globals. Removes read-only globals added previously.
<code>-c --compat</code>	Equivalent to <code>--std max</code> .
<code>-d --allow-defined</code>	Allow defining globals implicitly by setting them. See <i>Implicitly defined globals</i>
<code>-t --allow-defined-top</code>	Allow defining globals implicitly by setting them in the top level scope. See <i>Implicitly defined globals</i>
<code>-m --module</code>	Limit visibility of implicitly defined globals to their files. See <i>Modules</i>
<code>--no-unused-globals</code>	Filter out warnings related to set but unused global variables.
<code>--ignore -i <patt> [<patt>] ...</code>	Filter out warnings matching patterns.
<code>--enable -o <patt> [<patt>] ...</code>	Do not filter out warnings matching patterns.
<code>--only -o <patt> [<patt>] ...</code>	Filter out warnings not matching patterns.
<code>-l <limit> --limit <limit></code>	Exit with 0 if there are <limit> or less warnings (default: 0).
<code>--config <config></code>	Path to custom configuration file (default: <code>.luacheckrc</code>).
<code>--no-config</code>	Do not look up custom configuration file.
<code>-q --quiet</code>	Suppress report output for files without warnings.
2.1. Command line options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <code>-qq</code> - Suppress output of warnings. • <code>-qqq</code> - Only output summary.
<code>--no-color</code>	Do not colorize output.
<code>--help</code>	Show help and exit.

2.2 Patterns

CLI options `--ignore`, `--enable` and `--only` and corresponding config options allow filtering warnings using pattern matching on warning codes, variable names or both. If a pattern contains a slash, the part before slash matches warning code and the part after matches variable name. Otherwise, if a pattern contains a letter or underscore, it matches variable name. Otherwise, it matches warning code. E.g.:

Pattern	Matching warnings
4.2	Shadowing declarations of arguments or redefining them.
.*_	Warnings related to variables with <code>_</code> suffix.
4.2/*_	Shadowing declarations of arguments with <code>_</code> suffix or redefining them.

Configuration file

By default, `luacheck` tries to load configuration from `.luacheckrc` file in the current directory. Path to config can be set using `--config` option. Config loading can be disabled using `--no-config` flag.

Config is simply a Lua script executed by `luacheck`. It may set various options by assigning to globals.

3.1 Config options

Option	Type	Default value
<code>color</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>codes</code>	Boolean	<code>false</code>
<code>limit</code>	Number	<code>0</code>
<code>global</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>unused</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>redefined</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>unused_args</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>unused_values</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>unset</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>unused_secondaries</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>std</code>	String or array of strings	<code>"_G"</code>
<code>globals</code>	Array of strings	<code>{}</code>
<code>new_globals</code>	Array of strings	(Do not overwrite)
<code>read_globals</code>	Array of strings	<code>{}</code>
<code>new_read_globals</code>	Array of strings	(Do not overwrite)
<code>compat</code>	Boolean	<code>false</code>
<code>allow_defined</code>	Boolean	<code>false</code>
<code>allow_defined_top</code>	Boolean	<code>false</code>
<code>module</code>	Boolean	<code>false</code>
<code>unused_globals</code>	Boolean	<code>true</code>
<code>ignore</code>	Array of patterns (see <i>Patterns</i>)	<code>{}</code>
<code>enable</code>	Array of patterns	<code>{}</code>
<code>only</code>	Array of patterns	(Do not filter)

An example of a config which makes `luacheck` ensure that only globals from the portable intersection of Lua 5.1, Lua 5.2, Lua 5.3 and LuaJIT 2.0 are used, as well as disables detection of unused arguments:

```

1 std = "min"
2 ignore = {"211"}

```

3.2 Per-prefix overrides

The environment in which `luacheck` loads the config contains a special global `files`. When checking a file `<path>`, `luacheck` will override options from the main config with entries from `files[<path_prefix>]`, applying entries for shorter prefixes first. This allows to override options for a specific file by setting `files[<path>]`, and for all files in a directory by setting `files[<dir>/]`. For example, the following config re-enables detection of unused arguments only for files in `src/dir`, but not for `src/dir/myfile.lua`:

```
1 std = "min"
2 ignore = {"211"}
3
4 files["src/dir/"] = {
5     enable = {"211"}
6 }
7
8 files["src/dir/myfile.lua"] = {
9     ignore = {"211"}
10 }
```

Note that `files` table supports autovivification, so that

```
files["myfile.lua"].ignore = {"211"}
```

and

```
files["myfile.lua"] = {
    ignore = {"211"}
}
```

are equivalent.

Luacheck module

`luacheck` module is a single function. Use `local luacheck = require "luacheck"` to import it.

The first argument of the function should be an array. Each element should be either a file name (string) or an open file handle, in which case `luacheck` will read it till EOF and close it.

The second argument, if present, should be a table of options. See [Config options](#).

When checking *n*-th file, `luacheck` will try to combine `options[n]` and entries from its array part with general options, similarly to how per file config tables overwrite main config table.

4.1 Report format

The `luacheck` function returns a report. A report is an array of file reports plus fields `warnings` and `errors` containing total number of warnings and errors, correspondingly.

A file report is an array of warnings. If an error occurred while checking a file, its report will only have `error` field containing `"I/O"` or `"syntax"`.

A warning is a table with field `code` indicating the type of warning (see [List of warnings](#)), and fields `line` and `column` pointing to the source of the warning. For warnings related to redefined variables there also are fields `prev_line` and `prev_column` pointing to the previous declaration of the variable.

This is documentation for [Luacheck 0.8.0](#), a static analyzer and a linter for [Lua](#).