

**NAME**

new system call – How to add a new system call to libexplain

**DESCRIPTION**

Adding a new system call to libexplain is both simple and tedious.

In this example, the system call is called *example*, and takes two arguments, *pathname* and *flags*.

```
example(const char *pathname, int flags);
```

The libexplain library presents a C interface to the user, and explains the C system calls. It tries to avoid dynamic memory, and has several helper functions and structures to make this simpler.

**Naming Conventions**

In general, one function per file. This gives the static linker more opportunity to leave things out, thus producing smaller executables. Exceptions to make use of `static` common functions are acceptable. No savings for shared libraries, of course.

Functions that write their output into a *explain\_string\_buffer\_t* via the `explain_string_buffer_*` functions, all have a filename of `libexplain/buffer/something`.

Functions that write their output to a *message*, *message\_size* pair have a message path component in their file name.

Functions that accept an *errno* value as an argument have an `errno` path component in their file name, called `errnum`. If a function has both a buffer and an `errno`, the buffer comes first, both in the argument list, and the file's name. If a function has both a message+size and an `errno`, the message comes first, both in the argument list, and the file's name.

**MODIFIED FILES**

Note that the *codegen* command does most of the work for you. Pass it the function prototype (in single quotes) and it will do most of the work.

```
$ bin/codegen 'example(const char *pathname, int flags);'
creating catalogue/example
$
```

then you must edit the `catalogue/example` file to make any adjustment necessary. This file is then used to do the boring stuff:

```
$ bin/codegen example
creating explain/syscall/example.c
creating explain/syscall/example.h
creating libexplain/buffer/errno/example.c
creating libexplain/buffer/errno/example.h
creating libexplain/example.c
creating libexplain/example.h
creating libexplain/example_or_die.c
creating man/man3/explain_example.3
creating man/man3/explain_example_or_die.3
creating test_example/main.c
modify explain/syscall.c
modify libexplain/libexplain.h
modify man/man1/explain.1
modify man/man3/explain.3
$
```

All of these files have been added to the Aegis change set. Edit the last 4 to place the appended line in their correct positions within the files, respecting the symbol sort ordering of each file.

**libexplain/libexplain.h**

The `libexplain/libexplain.h` include file defines the user API. It, and any files it includes, are installed into `$(prefix)/include` by *make install*.

This file needs another include line. This means that the entire API is available to the user as a single

include directive.

```
#include <libexplain/example.h>
```

This file is also used to decide which files are installed by the *make install* command.

Take care that none of those files, directly or indirectly, wind up including `libexplain/config.h` which is generated by the *configure* script, and has **no** namespace protection.

This means you can't `#include <stddef.h>`, or use any of the types it defines, because on older systems *configure* works quite hard to cope with its absence. Ditto `<unistd.h>` and `<sys/types.h>`.

### **explain/main.c**

Include the include file for the new function, and add the function to the table.

### **man/man1/explain.1**

Add a description of the new system call.

### **man/man3/libexplain.3**

Add your new man pages, `man/man3/explain_example.3` and `man/man3/explain_example_or_die.3`, to the list. Keep the list sorted.

## **NEW FILES**

Note that the *codegen* command does most of the work for you. Pass it the function prototype (in single quotes) and it will do most of the work.

### **libexplain/buffer/errno/example.c**

The central file for adding a new example is `libexplain/buffer/errno/example.c` Which defines a function

```
void explain_buffer_errno_example(explain_string_buffer_t *buffer,
int errnum, const char *pathname, int flags);
```

The `errnum` argument holds the *errno* value. Note that calling *errno* usually has problems because many systems have *errno* as a macro, which makes the compiler barf, and because there are times you want access to the global *errno*, and having it shadowed by the argument is a nuisance.

This function writes its output into the buffer via the `explain_string_buffer_printf`, *etc*, functions. First the argument list is reprinted.

The `explain_string_buffer_puts_quoted` function should be used to print pathnames, because it uses full C quoting and escape sequences.

If an argument is a file descriptor, it should be called *fildes*, short for “file descriptor”. On systems capable of it, the file descriptor can be mapped to a pathname using the `explain_buffer_fildes_to_pathname` function. This makes explanations for system calls like *read* and *write* much more informative.

Next comes a switch on the `errnum` value, and additional explanation is given for each `errno` value documented (or sometimes undocumented) for that system call. Copy-and-paste of the man page is often useful as a basis for the text of the explanation, but be sure it is open source documentation, and not Copyright proprietary text.

Don't forget to check the existing `libexplain/buffer/e*.h` files for pre-canned explanations for common errors. Some pre-canned explanations include

EACCES	<code>explain_buffer_eaccess</code>
EADDRINUSE	<code>explain_buffer_eaddrinuse</code>
EAFNOSUPPORT	<code>explain_buffer_eafnosupport</code>
EBADF	<code>explain_buffer_ebadf</code>
EFAULT	<code>explain_buffer_efault</code>
EFBIG	<code>explain_buffer_efbig</code>
EINTR	<code>explain_buffer_eintr</code>
EINVAL	<code>explain_buffer_einval_vague, etc</code>

EIO	explain_buffer_eio
ELOOP	explain_buffer_eloop
EMFILE	explain_buffer_emfile
EMLINK	explain_buffer_emlink
ENAMETOOLONG	explain_buffer_enametoolong
ENFILE	explain_buffer_enfile
ENOBUFS	explain_buffer_enobufs
ENOENT	explain_buffer_enoent
ENOMEM	explain_buffer_enomem
ENOTCONN	explain_buffer_enotconn
ENOTDIR	explain_buffer_enotdir
ENOTSOCK	explain_buffer_enotsock
EROFS	explain_buffer_erofs
ETXTBSY	explain_buffer_etxtbsy
EXDEV	explain_buffer_exdev

**libexplain/buffer/errno/example.h**

This file holds the function prototype for the above function definition.

**libexplain/example.h**

The file contains the user visible API for the *example* system call. There are five function prototypes declared in this file:

```
void explain_example_or_die(const char *pathname, int flags);
void explain_example(const char *pathname, int flags);
void explain_errno_example(int errnum, const char *pathname, int flags);
void explain_message_example(const char *message, int message_size,
                             const char *pathname, int flags);
void explain_message_errno_example(const char *message, int message_size,
                                   int errnum, const char *pathname, int flags);
```

The function prototypes for these appear in the `libexplain/example.h` include file.

Each function prototype shall be accompanied by thorough Doxygen style comments. These are extracted and placed on the web site.

The buffer functions are **never** part of the user visible API.

**libexplain/example\_or\_die.c**

One function per file, `explain_example_or_die` in this case. It simply calls *example* and then, if fails, `explain_example` to print why, and then `exit(EXIT_FAILURE)`.

**libexplain/example.c**

One function per file, `explain_example` in this case. It simply calls `explain_errno_example` to pass in the global *errno* value.

**libexplain/errno/example.c**

One function per file, `explain_errno_example` in this case. It calls `explain_message_errno_example`, using the `<libexplain/global_message_buffer.h>` to hold the string.

**libexplain/message/example.c**

One function per file, `explain_message_example` in this case. It simply calls `explain_message_errno_example` to pass in the global *errno* value.

**libexplain/message/errno/example.c**

One function per file, `explain_message_errno_example` in this case. It declares and initializes a `explain_string_buffer_t` instance, which ensures that the message buffer will not be exceeded, and passes that buffer to the `explain_buffer_errno_example` function.

**man/man3/explain\_example.3**

This file also documents the error explanations functions, except `explain_example_or_dir`. Use the same text as you did in `libexplain/example.h`

**man/man3/explain\_example\_or\_die.3**

This file also documents the helper function. Use the same text as you did in `libexplain/example.h`

**explain/example.c**

Glue to turn the command line into arguments to a call to `explain_example`

**explain/example.h**

Function prototype for the above.

**test\_example/main.c**

This program should call `explain_explain_or_die`.

**NEW IOCTL REQUESTS**

Each different `ioctl(2)` request is, in effect, yet another system call. Except that they all have appallingly bad type safety. I have seen fugly C++ classes with less overloading than `ioctl(2)`.

**libexplain/iocontrol/request\_by\_number.c**

This file has one include line for each `ioctl(2)` request. There is a `table` array that contains a pointer to the `explain_iocontrol_t` variable declared in the include file (see next). Keep both sets of lines sorted alphabetically, it makes it easier to detect duplicates.

**libexplain/iocontrol/name.h**

Where *name* is the name of the `ioctl(2)` request in lower case. This declares an global const variable describing how to handle it.

**libexplain/iocontrol/name.c**

This defines the above global variable, and defines any static glue functions necessary to print a representation of it. You will probably have to read the kernel source to discover the errors the `ioctl` can return, and what causes them, in order to write the explanation function; they are almost never described in the man pages.

**TESTS**

Write at least one separate test for each case in the `errnum` switch.

**Debian Notes**

You can check that the Debian stuff builds by using

```
apt-get install pbuilder
```

```
pbuilder create
```

```
pbuilder login
```

now copy the files from *web-site/debian/* into the chroot

```
cd libexplain-*
```

```
dpkg-checkbuilddeps
```

```
apt-get install what dpkg-checkbuilddeps said
```

```
apt-get install devscripts
```

```
debuild
```

This should report success.

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libexplain version

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