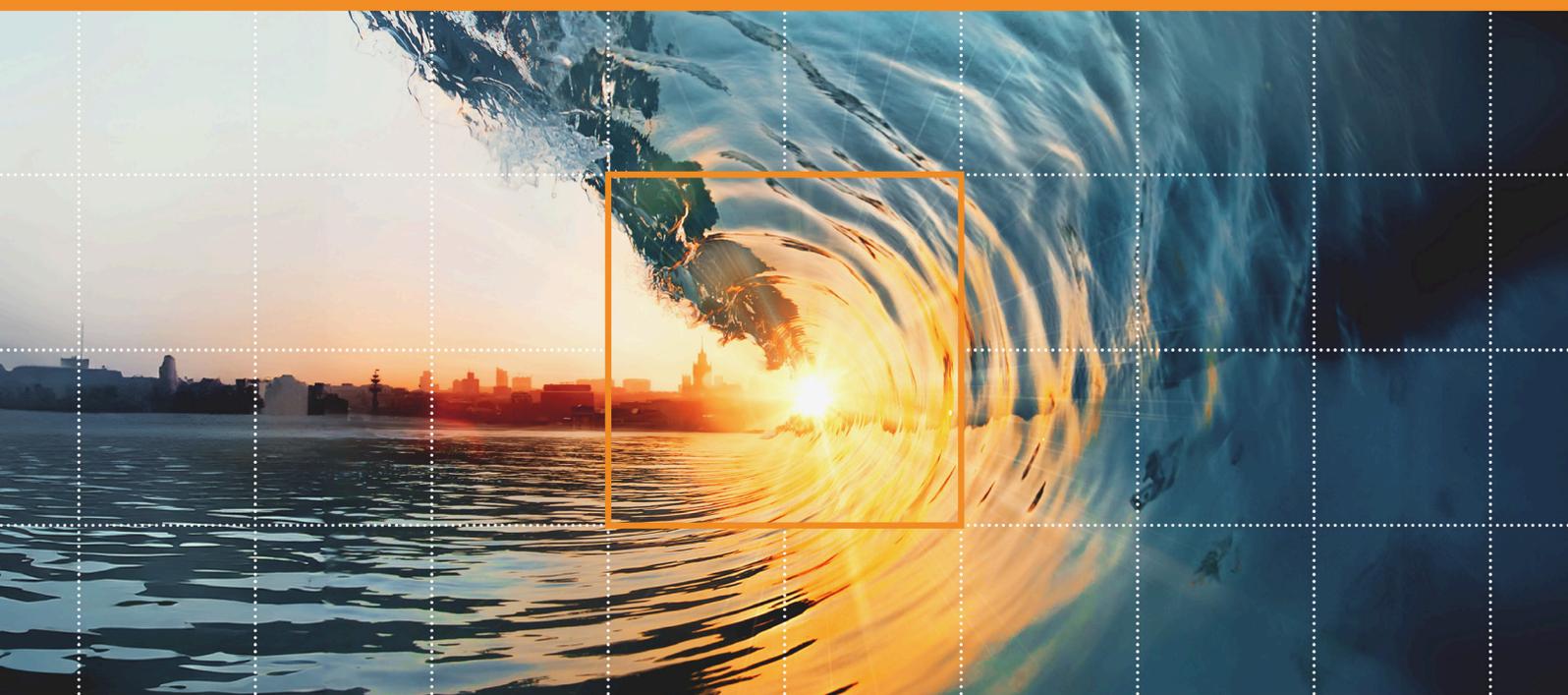




HALCON

a product of MVTec

Technical Updates



HALCON 25.11 *Progress*

This technical note describes how to meet technological changes in HALCON, Version 25.11.0.0.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Copyright © 2018-2025 by MVTec Software GmbH, Munich, Germany



Protected by the following patents: US 7,751,625, US 7,953,290, US 7,953,291, US 8,260,059, US 8,379,014, US 8,830,229, US 11,328,478. Further patents pending.

Microsoft, Windows, Microsoft .NET, Visual C++ and Visual Basic are either trademarks or registered trademarks of Microsoft Corporation.

All other nationally and internationally recognized trademarks and tradenames are hereby recognized.

More information about HALCON can be found at: <https://www.halcon.com>

About This Technical Note

This technical note describes technological changes in HALCON and how to adapt to them. Each chapter deals with a specific change in a specific version of HALCON. Typically, the chapters are completely unrelated by topic. Each chapter title lists the HALCON version which introduces the described changes.

Contents

1	Handles (18.05)	7
1.1	HDevelop Language	7
1.2	HALCON/C++, and HALCON/.NET Language Interface	7
1.3	Behavioral Changes	7
2	UTF-8 Encoding (18.11)	8
2.1	Legacy Encoding Mode	8

Chapter 1

Handles (18.05)

Handles are now a distinct control data type. The new handle data type provides a reference counting system similar to iconic objects. This allows HALCON to keep the ownership of handles and to support an automatic destructor mechanism, i.e., the tool will be cleared automatically when the last handle referencing it is destroyed. Thus, the explicit call of a clear operator is not needed anymore, but can still be used for early freeing of resources.

Previously, there was no way to recognize if a number was just a number or a reference to a tool. Furthermore, it was not possible to check the type of a tool or to check whether a tool was already destroyed. Thus, an explicit clear was needed to avoid resource leaks (especially cumbersome for types where you manage many instances like with `ObjectModel3D`).

1.1 HDevelop Language

The new control data type “handle” is represented as a magic value (e.g. `H12BF160`) in the variable window. This value cannot not be changed and may differ from execution to execution and version to version. Note that handles are no longer interchangeable with numeric values. Tools are automatically cleared when variables are overwritten or go out of scope (at the end of the procedure).

1.2 HALCON/C++, and HALCON/.NET Language Interface

Handles are represented by a new class `HHandle`. It is the base class of the specialized tool classes (`HShapeModel`, `HBarcode` etc.). `HTuple` supports `HHandle` as an additional element type (both in mixed and pure tuples). `HTuple` elements representing handles are accessed as `HHandle (*.H)` instead of `HLong (*.L)`. This is a common adaptation that will be needed within existing sources when they are to be ported to the new handle mechanism.

`HTuple` is now a disposable class in HALCON/.NET. When a `HTuple` or `HHandle` instance is destroyed, the reference counter of the affected handle(s) is decreased. When the reference counter reaches zero, the physical tool (e.g., a shape model) is destroyed automatically.

1.3 Behavioral Changes

Serializing `HTuple` instances that contain handles will now serialize the underlying tool. If the tool is not serializable, an exception is raised.

Cloning a `HTuple` instance also creates a deep copy via serialization. If this is not desired, use the copy constructor instead. In that case the handle in the tuple copy will contain an additional reference to the same tool.

Chapter 2

UTF-8 Encoding (18.11)

The default encoding which is used for representing strings with non-ASCII characters within the HALCON library is UTF-8 now. This allows to represent arbitrary characters in a unique way independent of the system and the current locale.

2.1 Legacy Encoding Mode

The locale encoding is still available as legacy mode for programs which expect non-ASCII strings to be encoded in the current locale: on western (Windows) systems, e.g., the program still expects `tuple_ord` to return the CP1252 codes (the Euro sign is '128' instead of '8364' in Unicode mode) and workarounds for Japanese encodings should work without changing the code.

The legacy mode can be enabled by setting the environment variable `HALCON_ENCODING` to `LOCALE` or by using `set_system`:

```
set_system('filename_encoding', 'locale')
```

Applications that use the HALCON/C or the HALCON/C++ interface for calling HALCON operators can also set the encoding of the interface independently of the HALCON encoding.

However, the following encoding issues will probably not work as expected in legacy encoding mode:

- Tuple string operators will not work character-wise. They behave as old HALCON versions to keep the legacy mode working as before.
- Changing the filename encoding from 'utf8' to 'locale' or vice versa via `set_system` does not work within JIT-compiled procedures. The strings that are passed to the procedure are encoded according to the filename encoding when entering the procedure. String constants within the procedure are encoded according to the filename encoding during the creation or last edit of the procedure.
- Error messages with non-ASCII characters were not and will not be displayed correctly on non-Latin systems, like Japanese Windows. On Latin systems, only two English messages are affected: `H_ERR_CAL_NEGTS` (8445) "Tilt must be within the range of 0° and 90°" and `H_ERR_CAL_NEGRS` (8446) "Rot must be within the range of 0° and 360°". German error messages with Umlauts will not be displayed correctly, too.
- On Japanese systems, the procedure `list_image_files` can produce invalid paths if a path contains a Japanese character where the second Shift-JIS byte has the same code as a backslash.
- The length passed to the operator `read_string` still limits the number of bytes. This affects the number of Asian multi-byte characters that effectively could be entered.
- The global system variables `window_name` and `icon_name` are stored with the encoding of the HALCON library when they are set. When the encoding is changed via `set_system` the names are not transcoded.

- All strings in HDevelop are always encoded in UTF-8, independently of the filename encoding. This implicates that it is not possible to create strings in legacy mode by their local hexadecimal codes (instead of writing them as character, e.g., `\xe4` for the Latin-1 character “ä”). The hexadecimal codes are not handled as the expected locale characters, but they are first interpreted as UTF-8 bytes and only converted to local-8-bit encoding when passed to the HALCON library.

Independently of the encoding mode, hostnames must be encoded in pure ASCII. Special characters are not supported. To query the hostname which is used, e.g., for socket connections, use:

```
get_system('hostname', Hostname)
```