

## CoCoA-5 - Feature #888

### Escaped newline to allow a long line to be split into several "physical lines"

07 Jun 2016 00:00 - John Abbott

<b>Status:</b>	New	<b>Start date:</b>	06 Jun 2016
<b>Priority:</b>	Normal	<b>Due date:</b>	
<b>Assignee:</b>		<b>% Done:</b>	0%
<b>Category:</b>	enhancing/improving	<b>Estimated time:</b>	0.00 hour
<b>Target version:</b>	CoCoA-5.?.?	<b>Spent time:</b>	0.75 hour
<b>Description</b>			
Some languages allow long lines to be split into several "physical lines" by inserting an escaped-newline which is simply regarded as no character at all.			
An example is in a makefile where a line ending with backslash is adjoined to the following line (and the backslash and newline are elided).			
Should we add such a feature to CoCoA-5?			

#### History

##### #1 - 07 Jun 2016 00:05 - John Abbott

I was surprised not to find this issue already in redmine; I'm sure we have talked about it (in the distant past... perhaps before we started to use redmine?).

The idea is to allow something like:

```
A := 123\  
456;
```

which would be the same as

```
A := 123456;
```

because the backslash-newline digraph is simply "ignored" by the parser (apart from incrementing the line counter). In principle, backslash-newline could even appear inside a keyword!

Such a facility would make it very easy to split a long "logical" line across many short "physical lines": just insert backslash-newline every 75 characters.

##### #2 - 07 Jun 2016 00:15 - John Abbott

I have just checked what happens with bash (which also uses the backslash-newline convention): it may appear inside a keyword or a variable name;

however an end-of-line comment (i.e. preceded by a hash) which ends with a backslash does not then extend to the next line.

If we do adopt this idea, what should happen if an end-of-line comment meets a backslash-newline digraph? Which behaviour is more "natural" (or less "unnatural")?

Note that, as in the example above, even an integer literal can be split across several lines; this could be occasionally useful.

### **#3 - 07 Jun 2016 00:26 - John Abbott**

Unfortunately there are probably some places where backslash-newline cannot be blindly inserted without changing the interpretation of the line: for instance, it might be "delicate" putting one inside another escape sequence... (or inside the backslash-newline escape sequence!)

What should the effect of backslash-backslash-newline-newline be? Probably backslash-backslash is an escape sequence for a single backslash character.

Of course, the most likely use case is splitting a very long line which has been produced as output of some program, and this will probably not contain escape sequences... in such instances there should be no problem inserting backslash-newline blindly wherever is convenient.