

Bonus operations for C++/WinRT iterators: The Iterable, and C++/WinRT collections



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Last time, we saw that C++/WinRT provides a few bonus operators to the `IIterator<T>` in order to make it work a little bit more smoothly with the C++ standard library.

Today we're going to look at `IIterable<T>`, which is an interface that says "You can get an iterator from me."

These Windows Runtime interfaces correspond to analogous concepts in many programming languages.

C++/WinRT	<code>IIterable<T></code>	<code>IIterator<T></code>
	<code>iterator = o.First();</code> <code>for (auto&& v : o) ...</code>	
C++	<code>begin/end</code>	<code>iterator</code>
	<code>iterator = begin(o);</code> <code>for (auto&& v : o) ...</code>	
C#	<code>IEnumerable<T></code>	<code>IEnumerator<T></code>
	<code>enumerator = o.GetEnumerator();</code> <code>foreach (var v in o) ...</code>	
Java	<code>Iterable<T></code>	<code>Iterator<T></code>
	<code>iterator = enumerable.iterator();</code> <code>for (var v : o) ...</code>	
JavaScript	<code>@@iterator</code>	(unnamed)
	<code>iterator = o[Symbol.iterator]();</code> <code>for (v in o) ...</code>	

As I noted in the table above, these iterators are designed primarily for use by ranged for statements.

```
for (auto&& value : collection)
{
    /* do something with value */
}
```

They can also be used in more general algorithms:

```
std::vector<int> to_vector(IIterable<int> const& collection)
{
    std::vector<int> v;
    std::copy(begin(collection), end(collection), std::back_inserter(v));
    return v;
}
```

Here's a peek behind the scenes: For collections which support a `GetAt` method (such as `IVector`, `IVectorView`, and `IBindableVector`), this is implemented by an internal `fast_iterator`, and the expansion of the ranged for loop comes out like this:

```
auto&& range = collection;
auto size = range.Size();
for (uint32_t index = 0; index < size; ++index)
{
    auto&& value = range.GetAt(index);
    /* do something with value */
}
```

The temporary `range` is part of the ranged for statement. There are some pre-existing subtleties here, [which I leave you to learn about](#).

For collections which are not indexable, but which are nevertheless iterable, the code falls back to the traditional `Iterator`-based loop:

```
for (auto iterator = as_cpp_iterator(collection.First()); iterator; ++iterator)
{
    auto&& value = *iterator;
    /* do something with value */
}
```

That version takes advantage of iterator overloads we saw last time.

But wait, we're not done yet. There's a little gotcha here that we'll look at next time.

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