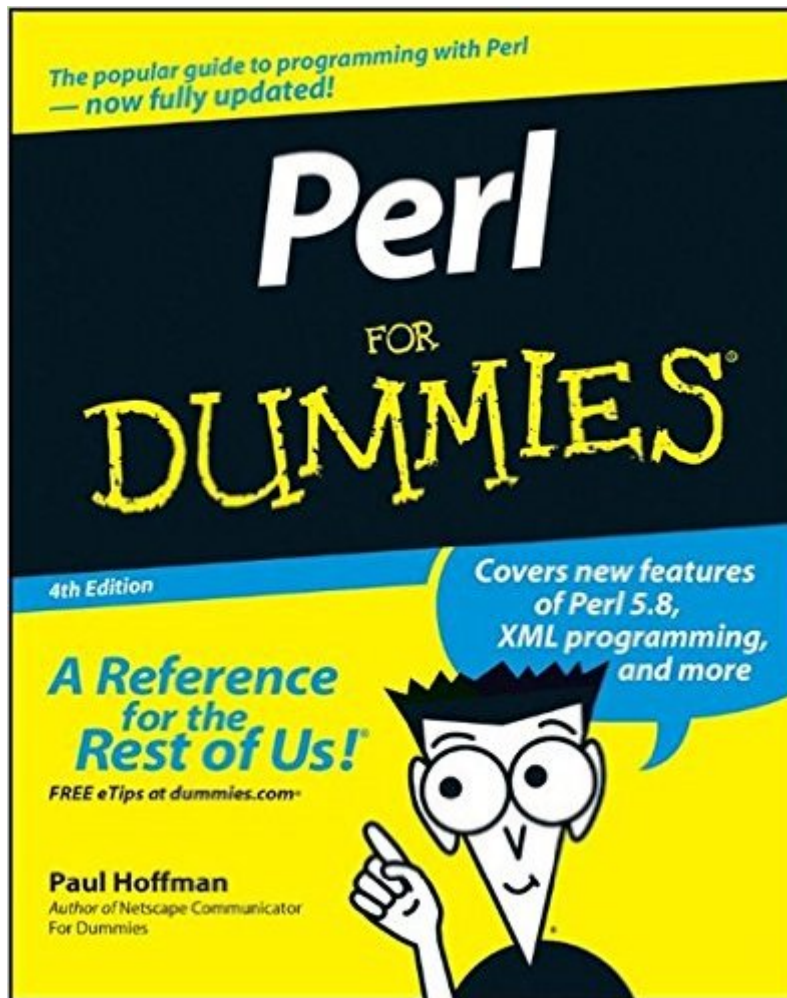


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Perl For Dummies



Synopsis

In the days before personal computers, BASIC was the easy programming language to learn, and serious programmers learned FORTRAN or COBOL to do "real work." • Today, many people have discovered that Perl is both a great beginning programming language and "one that enables them to write powerful programs with little effort. If you're interested in discovering how to program (or how others program), Perl For Dummies, 4th Edition, is for you. If you already know something about programming (but not about Perl), this book is also for you. If you're already an expert programmer, you're still welcome to read this book; you can just skip the basic stuff (you never know what kind of new tips and tricks you'll pick up). This reference guide shows you how to use Perl under many different operating systems, such as UNIX, many flavors of Windows (Windows 95/98, Windows NT, Windows 2000, Windows Me, and Windows XP), and Macintosh OS 9 and OS X; in fact, Perl runs on many more operating systems than these. Here's a sampling of what Perl For Dummies, 4th Edition, has to offer: Installing Perl on various platforms Nailing down the basics of building Perl programs Working with text and numbers Constructing lists and working with them Creating conditionals and loops Delving into more advanced features such as operators and functions Reading and writing files and directories Using subroutines for modularity Demystifying Web server programs Creating your own Internet clients The Perl programming language enables you to write fully working computer programs with just a few steps. It's particularly good at common programming tasks, such as reading and writing text files, but it also excels at reducing the work that programmers have to do. Perl For Dummies, 4th Edition, shows you how to do all of that and how to modify programs to your heart's content. After all, one of the common phrases in the world of Perl programmers is, "There's more than one way to do it." •

Book Information

Paperback: 408 pages

Publisher: For Dummies; 4 edition (March 21, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0764537504

ISBN-13: 978-0764537509

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.8 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (45 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #253,397 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #22 in Books > Computers &

Technology > Programming > Languages & Tools > Perl #363 inÂ Books > Textbooks > Computer Science > Software Design & Engineering #750 inÂ Books > Computers & Technology > Programming > Software Design, Testing & Engineering > Software Development

Customer Reviews

For those who frown upon Dummies books, you should ease up a bit and give this one some serious thought. Perl for Dummies is strictly for beginners. When I say beginners, I mean people with absolutely no programming experience in any language. I compared this book to Learning Perl and found that Learning Perl is written primarily for seasoned non-Perl programmers who are trying to learn Perl for the first time. If you are like me, with no programming know how, this is a more appropriate beginning. It explains such simplicities as scalars, arrays, adding and removing list elements, conditionals, etc. It even goes (lightly) into CGI and regular expressions. It does so in a language which understands that the reader is a "dummy" when it comes to programming and most importantly, it keeps it simple. Simplicity is the primary teaching strategy when dealing with a topic at the novice level, and Perl for Dummies does this well. The weakness of this book is that it does not do a good job of teaching you how to install Perl from the CD provided. In fact, the instructions provided were downright wrong. I had to ask a Perl programmer how to install and run Perl programs on my Windows 98 system. Another weakness, if you can call it that with a book at this level, is that it lacks program examples which would allow me to see what exactly can Perl do in the real world, such as system administration in a UNIX environment. I recommend this book as the starting point, with Learning Perl and Elements of Programming Perl as your next logical step. After you have mastered these books should you go on the Programming Perl and the Perl Cookbook.

I am copying an excerpt from "The Perl Journal" review of this book.__START__Summary: This is a really rotten book. Very few books are able to attain as many as eight major flaws:1. 'Dummy' approach encourages and reinforces the reader's disability2. Lack of concrete programming examples3. Lack of general discussion of how to program, apart from language-specific features4. Reference manual organization style5. Inclusion of too many useless and abstruse features6. Complicated explanations where simple ones are possible7. Scaremongering and panic instead of calm explanation of affairs8. Many, many technical errors, some very serious__END__I taught myself Perl with little programming background (BASIC, 20 years ago). I started 1 1/2 years ago and am now using it daily as a web developer and data analyst.Learning Perl from the books and resources out there is *extremely* difficult. There were many times I could've saved 3 weeks of

hammering on a script if a perl guru had said, "Hey, list context just means the function wants a list, like an array or hash." I understand very well that the O'Reilly books are godawful for a beginner b/c that's where I started and suffered long from every explanation that said simply, "It's just like in C, so we won't explain it." That said, the books are pretty terrific once you're at a level to absorb them, but steer clear before then, unless you already know everything that POSIX means. It might be tempting to pick up this book b/c there are pretty much no Perl books for those who haven't coded already. You should consider "The Elements of Perl" instead of this one. It's a better start for beginners and a wonderful way to start to understand Perl, its idioms, its culture, and how to program well. There is also "The Perl Black Book" which is a much better overview of the Perl than any single O'Reilly book, though the author isn't a guru, he's a good writer and tackles everything from the basics to advanced stuff with lots of examples and a CD with all the code. Perl is wonderful, so please do pick up a book, just not this one.

As always, you have to be very careful with the 'Dummies' line of programming books, as most of them turn out to be terrible. This one however, is terrific. It did a great job of simplifying the sometimes arcane syntax of Perl, and explaining (at least at a beginner level) how some of the Perl features differ on Unix systems and Win32 systems, and even on Mac systems. No, the book won't teach you everything; a Dummies book shouldn't be held up to that. When I was done with this one, I moved into the O'Reilly books to go further with Perl. This book will get you going in Perl much better than the O'Reilly Perl books of fame ('Learning Perl' and 'Programming Perl'), though. Popular opinion says everyone should be able to learn Perl from scratch from the O'Reilly books and that's just not true. They are colder, more rigid texts that will do fine when one is more advanced with Perl. I've only come across a couple of great 'Dummies' programming books, and this is one of them ('Active Server Pages for Dummies' was the other). Get over yourself - you're not too cool for a Dummies book. Buy this one.

This really is the best book I know of for learning Perl, and I say that as someone who owns a very large pile of books on the subject. I first bought it when I started a year of full-time Perl programming, and it was the book that let me get up and running. Some years later, I *still* go back to it occasionally--there are some things that it just explains better than other books do. (In particular, it does a good job with some of the occasional dark corners of dereferencing arrays in complex data structures. If you know what that means: there's some weird syntax to this that this book gives very clear examples of. If you don't know what that means: trust me when I say that this

book will tell you how to handle it without requiring that you completely understand why it's hard first, and that's a VERY good thing.)If you're already an experienced programmer, you'll do fine reading the introductory material in Larry Wall et al.'s "Programming Perl," but whether you're an old hat at hacking or not, you'll get plenty out of this book. When you're up to speed, your next book should probably be "Programming Perl" or Nigel Chapman's "Perl: The Programmer's Companion."

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