
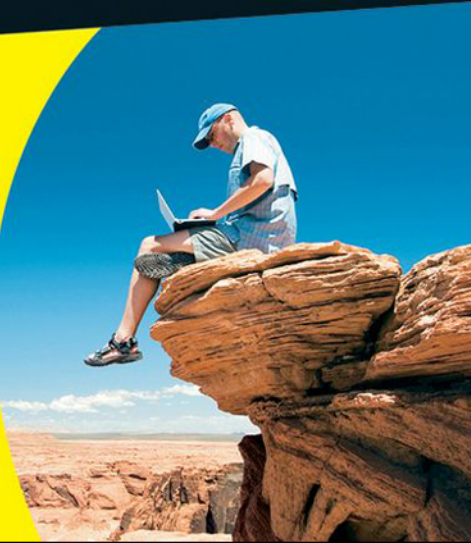


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**Stephen R. Davis**  
Author of C++ For Dummies

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*Beginning  
Programming with C++*  
FOR  
DUMMIES®

**by Stephen R. Davis**



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# Contents at a Glance

.....

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b><i>Part I: Let's Get Started</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
Chapter 1: What Is a Program?.....	9
Chapter 2: Installing Code::Blocks .....	21
Chapter 3: Writing Your First Program .....	33
<b><i>Part II: Writing a Program: Decisions, Decisions</i></b> .....	<b>45</b>
Chapter 4: Integer Expressions .....	47
Chapter 5: Character Expressions .....	59
Chapter 6: if I Could Make My Own Decisions .....	69
Chapter 7: Switching Paths.....	81
Chapter 8: Debugging Your Programs, Part I.....	89
<b><i>Part III: Becoming a Functional Programmer</i></b> .....	<b>97</b>
Chapter 9: while Running in Circles .....	99
Chapter 10: Looping for the Fun of It .....	109
Chapter 11: Functions, I Declare!.....	117
Chapter 12: Dividing Programs into Modules .....	129
Chapter 13: Debugging Your Programs, Part 2 .....	139
<b><i>Part IV: Data Structures</i></b> .....	<b>149</b>
Chapter 14: Other Numerical Variable Types .....	151
Chapter 15: Arrays.....	165
Chapter 16: Arrays with Character.....	173
Chapter 17: Pointing the Way to C++ Pointers .....	187
Chapter 18: Taking a Second Look at C++ Pointers.....	203
Chapter 19: Programming with Class .....	223
Chapter 20: Debugging Your Programs, Part 3 .....	235
<b><i>Part V: Object-Oriented Programming</i></b> .....	<b>251</b>
Chapter 21: What Is Object-Oriented Programming?.....	253
Chapter 22: Structured Play: Making Classes Do Things .....	259
Chapter 23: Pointers to Objects.....	269
Chapter 24: Do Not Disturb: Protected Members.....	281
Chapter 25: Getting Objects Off to a Good Start .....	289

---

Chapter 26: Making Constructive Arguments .....	303
Chapter 27: Coping with the Copy Constructor.....	323
<b><i>Part VI: Advanced Strokes.....</i></b>	<b>333</b>
Chapter 28: Inheriting a Class .....	335
Chapter 29: Are Virtual Functions for Real?.....	343
Chapter 30: Overloading Assignment Operators.....	355
Chapter 31: Performing Streaming I/O.....	363
Chapter 32: I Take Exception!.....	387
<b><i>Part VII: The Part of Tens.....</i></b>	<b>397</b>
Chapter 33: Ten Ways to Avoid Bugs .....	399
Chapter 34: Ten Features Not Covered in This Book.....	405
<b><i>Appendix: About the CD .....</i></b>	<b>411</b>
<b><i>Index .....</i></b>	<b>415</b>

---

# Table of Contents

---

<b><i>Introduction</i></b> .....	<b>1</b>
About Beginning Programming with C++ For Dummies .....	1
Foolish Assumptions .....	2
Conventions Used in This Book .....	2
What You Don't Have to Read .....	3
How This Book Is Organized .....	3
Part I: Let's Get Started .....	3
Part II: Writing a Program: Decisions, Decisions .....	4
Part III: Becoming a Functional Programmer .....	4
Part IV: Data Structures .....	4
Part V: Object-Oriented Programming .....	4
Part VI: Advanced Strokes .....	4
Part VII: The Part of Tens .....	5
The CD-ROM Appendix .....	5
Icons Used in This Book .....	5
Where to Go from Here .....	6
<b><i>Part I: Let's Get Started</i></b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Chapter 1: What Is a Program?</b> .....	<b>9</b>
How Does My Son Differ from a Computer? .....	9
Programming a "Human Computer" .....	11
The algorithm .....	11
The Tire Changing Language .....	12
The program .....	13
Computer processors .....	16
Computer Languages .....	17
High level languages .....	18
The C++ language .....	19
<b>Chapter 2: Installing Code::Blocks</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Reviewing the Compilation Process .....	21
Installing Code::Blocks .....	23
Testing the Code::Blocks Installation .....	25
Creating the project .....	27
Testing your default project .....	30
<b>Chapter 3: Writing Your First Program</b> .....	<b>33</b>
Creating a New Project .....	33
Entering Your Program .....	35
Building the Program .....	38



Finding What Could Go Wrong .....	38
Misspelled commands.....	38
Missing semicolon .....	40
Using the Enclosed CD-ROM .....	41
Running the Program .....	42
How the Program Works.....	42
The template .....	42
The Conversion program.....	44

***Part II: Writing a Program: Decisions, Decisions* ..... 45**

**Chapter 4: Integer Expressions ..... 47**

Declaring Variables .....	47
Variable names.....	48
Assigning a value to a variable.....	49
Initializing a variable at declaration .....	49
Integer Constants .....	50
Expressions .....	51
Binary operators .....	51
Decomposing compound expressions .....	53
Unary Operators .....	54
The Special Assignment Operators .....	56

**Chapter 5: Character Expressions ..... 59**

Defining Character Variables .....	59
Encoding characters.....	60
Example of character encoding .....	63
Encoding Strings of Characters .....	65
Special Character Constants .....	65

**Chapter 6: if I Could Make My Own Decisions ..... 69**

The if Statement.....	69
Comparison operators .....	70
Say “No” to “No braces” .....	72
What else Is There? .....	73
Nesting if Statements .....	75
Compound Conditional Expressions.....	78

**Chapter 7: Switching Paths ..... 81**

Controlling Flow with the switch Statement .....	81
Control Fell Through: Did I break It?.....	84
Implementing an Example Calculator with the switch Statement.....	85

<b>Chapter 8: Debugging Your Programs, Part I</b> .....	<b>89</b>
Identifying Types of Errors.....	89
Avoiding Introducing Errors .....	90
Coding with style .....	90
Establishing variable naming conventions.....	91
Finding the First Error with a Little Help.....	92
Finding the Run-Time Error.....	93
Formulating test data .....	93
Executing the test cases.....	94
Seeing what's going on in your program .....	95

## ***Part III: Becoming a Functional Programmer***..... **97**

<b>Chapter 9: while Running in Circles</b> .....	<b>99</b>
Creating a while Loop .....	99
Breaking out of the Middle of a Loop.....	102
Nested Loops .....	105
<b>Chapter 10: Looping for the Fun of It</b> .....	<b>109</b>
The for Parts of Every Loop .....	109
Looking at an Example.....	111
Getting More Done with the Comma Operator.....	113
<b>Chapter 11: Functions, I Declare!</b> .....	<b>117</b>
Breaking Your Problem Down into Functions .....	117
Understanding How Functions Are Useful .....	118
Writing and Using a Function.....	119
Returning things.....	120
Reviewing an example.....	121
Passing Arguments to Functions .....	123
Function with arguments .....	124
Functions with multiple arguments.....	125
Exposing main().....	125
Defining Function Prototype Declarations .....	127
<b>Chapter 12: Dividing Programs into Modules</b> .....	<b>129</b>
Breaking Programs Apart .....	129
Breaking Up Isn't That Hard to Do .....	130
Creating Factorial.cpp.....	131
Creating an #include file .....	133
Including #include files .....	134
Creating main.cpp.....	136
Building the result .....	137



Using the Standard C++ Library.....	137
Variable Scope .....	137
<b>Chapter 13: Debugging Your Programs, Part 2 .....</b>	<b>139</b>
Debugging a Dys-Functional Program.....	139
Performing unit level testing.....	141
Outfitting a function for testing.....	143
Returning to unit test .....	146
 <b>Part IV: Data Structures .....</b>	 <b>149</b>
<b>Chapter 14: Other Numerical Variable Types .....</b>	<b>151</b>
The Limitations of Integers in C++.....	151
Integer round-off.....	151
Limited range.....	152
A Type That “doubles” as a Real Number .....	153
Solving the truncation problem.....	153
When an integer is not an integer.....	154
Discovering the limits of double.....	155
Variable Size — the “long” and “short” of It.....	158
How far do numbers range? .....	159
Types of Constants.....	160
Passing Different Types to Functions .....	161
Overloading function names .....	162
Mixed mode overloading .....	162
<b>Chapter 15: Arrays .....</b>	<b>165</b>
What Is an Array? .....	165
Declaring an Array.....	166
Indexing into an Array .....	167
Looking at an Example.....	168
Initializing an Array .....	171
<b>Chapter 16: Arrays with Character .....</b>	<b>173</b>
The ASCII-Zero Character Array .....	173
Declaring and Initializing an ASCIIZ Array.....	174
Looking at an Example.....	175
Looking at a More Detailed Example.....	177
Foiling hackers .....	181
Do I Really Have to Do All That Work?.....	182
<b>Chapter 17: Pointing the Way to C++ Pointers .....</b>	<b>187</b>
What’s a Pointer?.....	187
Declaring a Pointer .....	188

Passing Arguments to a Function .....	190
Passing arguments by value .....	190
Passing arguments by reference .....	193
Putting it together .....	195
Playing with Heaps of Memory .....	197
Do you really need a new keyword? .....	197
Don't forget to clean up after yourself .....	198
Looking at an example .....	199
<b>Chapter 18: Taking a Second Look at C++ Pointers .....</b>	<b>203</b>
Pointers and Arrays .....	203
Operations on pointers .....	203
Pointer addition versus indexing into an array .....	205
Using the pointer increment operator .....	208
Why bother with array pointers? .....	210
Operations on Different Pointer Types .....	212
Constant Nags .....	212
Differences Between Pointers and Arrays .....	214
My main() Arguments .....	214
Arrays of pointers .....	215
Arrays of arguments .....	216
<b>Chapter 19: Programming with Class .....</b>	<b>223</b>
Grouping Data .....	223
The Class .....	224
The Object .....	225
Arrays of Objects .....	226
Looking at an Example .....	227
<b>Chapter 20: Debugging Your Programs, Part 3 .....</b>	<b>235</b>
A New Approach to Debugging .....	235
The solution .....	236
Entomology for Dummies .....	236
Starting the debugger .....	239
Navigating through a program with the debugger .....	241
Fixing the (first) bug .....	245
Finding and fixing the second bug .....	246
<b>Part V: Object-Oriented Programming .....</b>	<b>251</b>
<b>Chapter 21: What Is Object-Oriented Programming? .....</b>	<b>253</b>
Abstraction and Microwave Ovens .....	253
Functional nachos .....	254
Object-oriented nachos .....	255
Classification and Microwave Ovens .....	256
Why Build Objects This Way? .....	256
Self-Contained Classes .....	257

<b>Chapter 22: Structured Play: Making Classes Do Things . . . . .</b>	<b>259</b>
Activating Our Objects .....	259
Creating a Member Function.....	261
Defining a member function .....	261
Naming class members .....	262
Calling a member function.....	263
Accessing other members from within a member function.....	264
Keeping a Member Function after Class .....	266
Overloading Member Functions .....	267
<b>Chapter 23: Pointers to Objects . . . . .</b>	<b>269</b>
Pointers to Objects.....	269
Arrow syntax .....	270
Calling all member functions.....	271
Passing Objects to Functions.....	271
Calling a function with an object value.....	271
Calling a function with an object pointer .....	272
Looking at an example .....	274
Allocating Objects off the Heap .....	278
<b>Chapter 24: Do Not Disturb: Protected Members . . . . .</b>	<b>281</b>
Protecting Members.....	281
Why you need protected members .....	282
Making members protected .....	282
So what? .....	285
Who Needs Friends Anyway? .....	286
<b>Chapter 25: Getting Objects Off to a Good Start. . . . .</b>	<b>289</b>
The Constructor .....	289
Limitations on constructors.....	291
Can I see an example? .....	292
Constructing data members .....	294
Destructors.....	297
Looking at an example .....	297
Destructing data members .....	300
<b>Chapter 26: Making Constructive Arguments . . . . .</b>	<b>303</b>
Constructors with Arguments .....	303
Looking at an example .....	304
Overloading the Constructor .....	307
The Default default Constructor.....	312
Constructing Data Members .....	313
Initializing data members with the default constructor .....	314
Initializing data members with a different constructor .....	315
Looking at an example .....	318
New with C++ 2009 .....	321

<b>Chapter 27: Coping with the Copy Constructor</b> .....	<b>323</b>
Copying an Object .....	323
The default copy constructor .....	324
Looking at an example .....	325
Creating a Copy Constructor .....	327
Avoiding Copies .....	330

## ***Part VI: Advanced Strokes*** .....

## **333**

<b>Chapter 28: Inheriting a Class</b> .....	<b>335</b>
Advantages of Inheritance .....	336
Learning the lingo .....	337
Implementing Inheritance in C++ .....	337
Looking at an example .....	338
Having a HAS_A Relationship .....	342
<b>Chapter 29: Are Virtual Functions for Real?</b> .....	<b>343</b>
Overriding Member Functions .....	343
Early binding .....	344
Ambiguous case .....	346
Enter late binding .....	348
When Is Virtual Not? .....	351
Virtual Considerations .....	352
<b>Chapter 30: Overloading Assignment Operators</b> .....	<b>355</b>
Overloading an Operator .....	355
Overloading the Assignment Operator Is Critical .....	356
Looking at an Example .....	358
Writing Your Own (or Not) .....	361
<b>Chapter 31: Performing Streaming I/O</b> .....	<b>363</b>
How Stream I/O Works .....	363
Stream Input/Output .....	365
Creating an input object .....	365
Creating an output object .....	366
Open modes .....	367
What is binary mode? .....	368
Hey, file, what state are you in? .....	369
Other Member Functions of the fstream Classes .....	373
Reading and writing streams directly .....	375
Controlling format .....	378
What's up with endl? .....	380
Manipulating Manipulators .....	380
Using the stringstream Classes .....	382

<b>Chapter 32: I Take Exception!</b> .....	<b>387</b>
The Exception Mechanism .....	387
Examining the exception mechanism in detail .....	390
Special considerations for throwing .....	391
Creating a Custom Exception Class .....	392
Restrictions on exception classes .....	395
 <b>Part VII: The Part of Tens</b> .....	 <b>397</b>
<b>Chapter 33: Ten Ways to Avoid Bugs</b> .....	<b>399</b>
Enable All Warnings and Error Messages.....	399
Adopt a Clear and Consistent Coding Style .....	400
Comment the Code While You Write It.....	401
Single-Step Every Path in the Debugger at Least Once.....	401
Limit the Visibility .....	402
Keep Track of Heap Memory.....	402
Zero Out Pointers after Deleting What They Point To.....	403
Use Exceptions to Handle Errors.....	403
Declare Destructors Virtual .....	403
Provide a Copy Constructor and Overloaded Assignment Operator ...	404
 <b>Chapter 34: Ten Features Not Covered in This Book</b> .....	 <b>405</b>
The goto Command.....	405
The Ternary Operator.....	406
Binary Logic .....	407
Enumerated Types .....	407
Namespaces .....	407
Pure Virtual Functions .....	408
The string Class .....	408
Multiple Inheritance .....	409
Templates and the Standard Template Library.....	409
The 2009 C++ Standard .....	410
 <b>Appendix: About the CD</b> .....	 <b>411</b>
 <b>Index</b> .....	 <b>415</b>

---

# Introduction

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**W**elcome to *Beginning Programming with C++ For Dummies*. This book is intended for the reader who wants to learn to program.

Somehow over the years, programming has become associated with mathematics and logic calculus and other complicated things. I never quite understood that. Programming is a skill like writing advertising or drawing or photography. It does require the ability to think a problem through, but I've known some really good programmers who had zero math skills. Some people are naturally good at it and pick it up quickly, others not so good and not so quick. Nevertheless, anyone with enough patience and "stick-to-itiveness" can learn to program a computer. Even me.

## *About Beginning Programming with C++ For Dummies*

Learning to program necessarily means learning a programming language. This book is based upon the C++ programming language. A Windows version of the suggested compiler is included on the CD-ROM accompanying this book. Macintosh and Linux versions are available for download at [www.codeblocks.org](http://www.codeblocks.org). (Don't worry: I include step-by-step instructions for how to install the package and build your first program in the book.)

The goal of this book is to teach you the basics of programming in C++, not to inundate you with every detail of the C++ programming language. At the end of this book, you will be able to write a reasonably sophisticated program in C++. You will also be in a position to quickly grasp a number of other similar languages, such as Java and C#.NET.

In this book, you will discover what a program is, how it works, plus how to do the following:

- ✔ Install the CodeBlocks C++ compiler and use it to build a program
- ✔ Create and evaluate expressions
- ✔ Direct the flow of control through your program

- ✔ Create data structures that better model the real world
- ✔ Define and use C++ pointers
- ✔ Manipulate character strings to generate the output the way you want to see it
- ✔ Write to and read from files

## *Foolish Assumptions*

I try to make very few assumptions in this book about the reader, but I do assume the following:

- ✔ **You have a computer.** Most readers will have computers that run Windows; however, the programs in this book run equally well on Windows, Macintosh, Linux, and Unix. In fact, since C++ is a standardized language, these programs should run on any computer that has a C++ compiler.
- ✔ **You know the basics of how to use your computer.** For example, I assume that you know how to run a program, copy a file, create a folder, and so on.
- ✔ **You know how to navigate through menus.** I include lots of instructions like “Click on File and then Open.” If you can follow that instruction, then you’re good to go.
- ✔ **You are new to programming.** I don’t assume that you know anything about programming. Heck, I don’t even assume that you know what programming is.

## *Conventions Used in This Book*

To help you navigate this book as efficiently as possible, I use a few conventions:

- ✔ C++ terms are in monospace typeface, like `this`.
- ✔ New terms are emphasized with *italics* (and defined).
- ✔ Numbered steps that you need to follow and characters you need to type are set in **bold**.

## What You Don't Have to Read

I encourage you to read one part of the book; then put the book away and play for a while before moving to the next part. The book is organized so that by the end of each part, you have mastered enough new material to go out and write programs.

I'd like to add the following advice:

- ✔ If you already know what programming is but nothing about C++, you can skip Chapter 1.
- ✔ I recommend that you use the CodeBlocks compiler that comes with the book, even if you want to use a different C++ compiler after you finish the book. However, if you insist and don't want to use CodeBlocks, you can skip Chapter 2.
- ✔ Skim through Chapter 3 if you've already done a little computer programming.
- ✔ Start concentrating at Chapter 4, even if you have experience with other languages such as BASIC.
- ✔ You can stop reading after Chapter 20 if you're starting to feel saturated. Chapter 21 opens up the new topic of object-oriented programming — you don't want to take that on until you feel really comfortable with what you've learned so far.
- ✔ You can skip any of the TechnicalStuff icons.

## How This Book Is Organized

*Beginning Programming with C++ For Dummies* is split into seven parts. You don't have to read it sequentially, and you don't even have to read all the sections in any particular chapter. You can use the Table of Contents and the Index to find the information you need and quickly get your answer. In this section, I briefly describe what you'll find in each part.

### **Part 1: Let's Get Started**

This part describes what programs are and how they work. Using a fictitious tire-changing computer, I take you through several algorithms for removing a tire from a car to give you a feel for how programs work. You'll also get CodeBlocks up and running on your computer before leaving this part.



## ***Part II: Writing a Program: Decisions, Decisions***

This part introduces you to the basics of programming with C++. You will find out how to declare integer variables and how to write simple expressions. You'll even discover how to make decisions within a program, but you won't be much of an expert by the time you finish this part.

## ***Part III: Becoming a Functional Programmer***

Here you learn how to direct the flow of control within your programs. You'll find out how to loop, how to break your code into modules (and why), and how to build these separate modules back into a single program. At the end of this part, you'll be able to write real programs that actually solve problems.

## ***Part IV: Data Structures***

This part expands your knowledge of data types. Earlier sections of the book are limited to integers; in this part, you work with characters, decimals, and arrays; and you even get to define your own types. Finally, this is the part where you master the most dreaded topic, the C++ pointer.

## ***Part V: Object-Oriented Programming***

This is where you expand your knowledge into object-oriented techniques, the stuff that differentiates C++ from its predecessors, most notably C. (Don't worry if you don't know what object-oriented programming is — you aren't supposed to yet.) You'll want to be comfortable with the material in Parts I through IV before jumping into this part, but you'll be a much stronger programmer by the time you finish it.

## ***Part VI: Advanced Strokes***

This is a collection of topics that are important but that didn't fit in the earlier parts. For example, here's where I discuss how to create, read to, and write from files.

## Part VII: The Part of Tens

This part includes lists of what to do (and what not to do) when programming to avoid creating bugs needlessly. In addition, this part includes some advice about what topics to study next, should you decide to expand your knowledge of C++.

## The CD-ROM Appendix

This part describes what's on the enclosed CD-ROM and how to install it.

## Icons Used in This Book

What's a *Dummies* book without icons pointing you in the direction of really great information that's sure to help you along your way? In this section, I briefly describe each icon I use in this book.



The Tip icon points out helpful information that is likely to make your job easier.



This icon marks a generally interesting and useful fact — something that you might want to remember for later use. I also use this icon to remind you of some fact that you may have skipped over in an earlier chapter.



The Warning icon highlights lurking danger. With this icon, I'm telling you to pay attention and proceed with caution.



When you see this icon, you know that there's techie stuff nearby. If you're not feeling very techie, you can skip this info.



This icon denotes the programs that are included on this book's CD-ROM.

## *Where to Go from Here*

You can find a set of errata and Frequently Asked Questions for this and all my books at [www.stephendavis.com](http://www.stephendavis.com). You will also find a link to my e-mail address there. Feel free to send me your questions and comments (that's how I learn). It's through reader input that these books can improve.

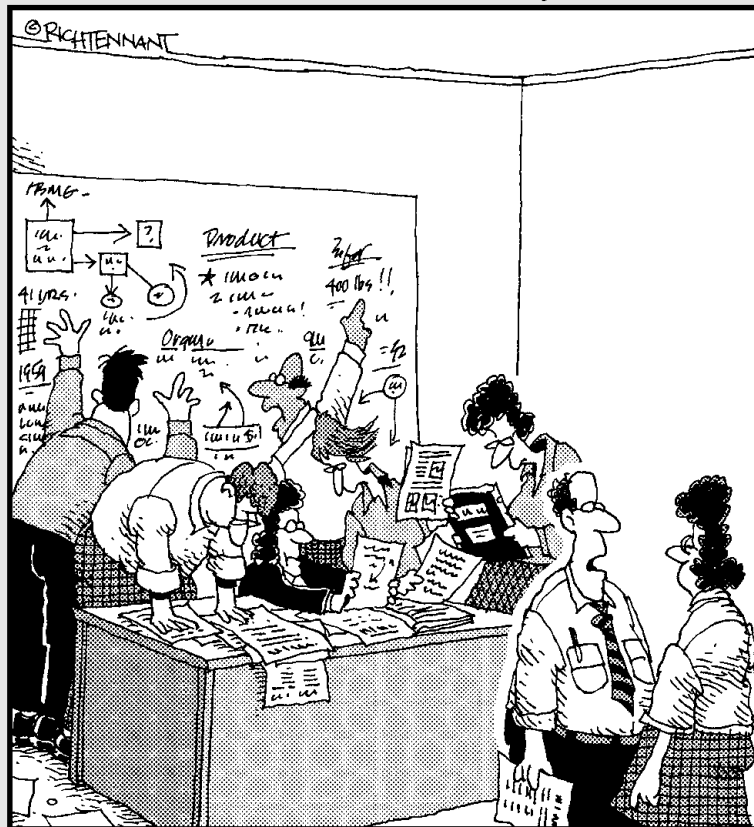
Now you've stalled long enough, it's time to turn to Chapter 1 and start discovering how to program!

# Part I

# Let's Get Started

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



"We're outsourcing everything but our core competency. Once we find out what that is, we'll begin the outsourcing process."

## *In this part . . .*

**Y**ou will learn what it means to program a computer. You will also get your first taste of programming — I take you through the steps to enter, build, and execute your first program. It will all be a bit mysterious in this part, but things will clear up soon, I promise.

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## Chapter 1

# What Is a Program?

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Understanding programs
  - ▶ Writing your first “program”
  - ▶ Looking at computer languages
- .....

**I**n this chapter, you will learn what a program is and what it means to write a program. You’ll practice on a Human Computer. You’ll then see some program snippets written for a real computer. Finally, you’ll see your first code snippet written in C++.

Up until now all of the programs running on your computer were written by someone else. Very soon now, that won’t be true anymore. You will be joining the ranks of the few, the proud: the programmers.

## *How Does My Son Differ from a Computer?*

A computer is an amazingly fast but incredibly stupid machine. A computer can do anything you tell it (within reason), but it does *exactly* what it’s told — nothing more and nothing less.

In this respect, a computer is almost the exact opposite of a human: humans respond intuitively. When I was learning a second language, I learned that it wasn’t enough to understand what was being said — it’s just as important and considerably more difficult to understand what was left unsaid. This is information that the speaker shares with the listener through common experience or education — things that don’t need to be said.

For example, I say things to my son like, “Wash the dishes” (for all the good it does me). This seems like clear enough instructions, but the vast majority of the information contained in that sentence is implied and unspoken.

Let's assume that my son knows what dishes are and that dirty dishes are normally in the sink. But what about knives and forks? After all, I only said dishes, I didn't say anything about eating utensils, and don't even get me started on glassware. And did I mean wash them manually, or is it okay to load them up into the dishwasher to be washed, rinsed, and dried automatically?

But the fact is, “Wash the dishes” is sufficient instruction for my son. He can decompose that sentence and combine it with information that we both share, including an extensive working knowledge of dirty dishes, to come up with a meaningful understanding of what I want him to do — whether he does it or not is a different story. I would guess that he can perform all the mental gymnastics necessary to understand that sentence in about the same amount of time that it takes me to say it — about 1 to 2 seconds.

A computer can't make heads or tails out of something as vague as “wash the dishes.” You have to tell the computer exactly what to do with each different type of dish, how to wash a fork, versus a spoon, versus a cup. When does the program stop washing a dish (that is, how does it know when a dish is clean)? When does it stop washing (that is, how does it know when it's finished)?

My son has gobs of memory — it isn't clear exactly how much memory a normal human has, but it's boat loads. Unfortunately, human memory is fuzzy. For example, witnesses to crimes are notoriously bad at recalling details even a short time after the event. Two witnesses to the same event often disagree radically on what transpired.

Computers also have gobs of memory, and that's very good. Once stored, a computer can retrieve a fact as often as you like without change. As expensive as memory was back in the early 1980s, the original IBM PC had only 16K (that's 16 thousand bytes). This could be expanded to a whopping 64K. Compare this with the 1GB to 3GB of main storage available in most computers today (1GB is *one billion bytes*).

As expensive as memory was, however, the IBM PC included extra memory chips and decoding hardware to detect a memory failure. If a memory chip went bad, this circuitry was sure to find it and report it before the program went haywire. This so-called Parity Memory was no longer offered after only a few years, and as far as I know, it is unavailable today except in specific applications where extreme reliability is required — because the memory boards almost never fail.

On the other hand, humans are very good at certain types of processing that computers do poorly, if at all. For example, humans are very good at pulling the meaning out of a sentence garbled by large amounts of background noise. By contrast, digital cell phones have the infuriating habit of just going silent whenever the noise level gets above a built-in threshold.

## *Programming a “Human Computer”*

Before I dive into showing you how to write programs for computer consumption, I start by showing you a program to guide human behavior so that you can better see what you’re up against. Writing a program to guide a human is much easier than writing programs for computer hardware because we have a lot of familiarity with and understanding of humans and how they work (I assume). We also share a common human language to start with. But to make things fair, assume that the human computer has been instructed to be particularly literal — so the program will have to be very specific. Our guinea pig computer intends to take each instruction quite literally.

The problem I have chosen is to instruct our human computer in the changing of a flat tire.

### *The algorithm*

The instructions for changing a flat tire are straightforward and go something like the following:

1. Raise the car.
2. Remove the lug nuts that affix the faulty tire to the car.
3. Remove the tire.
4. Mount the new tire.
5. Install the lug nuts.
6. Lower the car.

(I know that technically the lug nuts hold the wheel onto the car and not the tire, but that distinction isn’t important here. I use the terms “wheel” and “tire” synonymously in this discussion.)



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