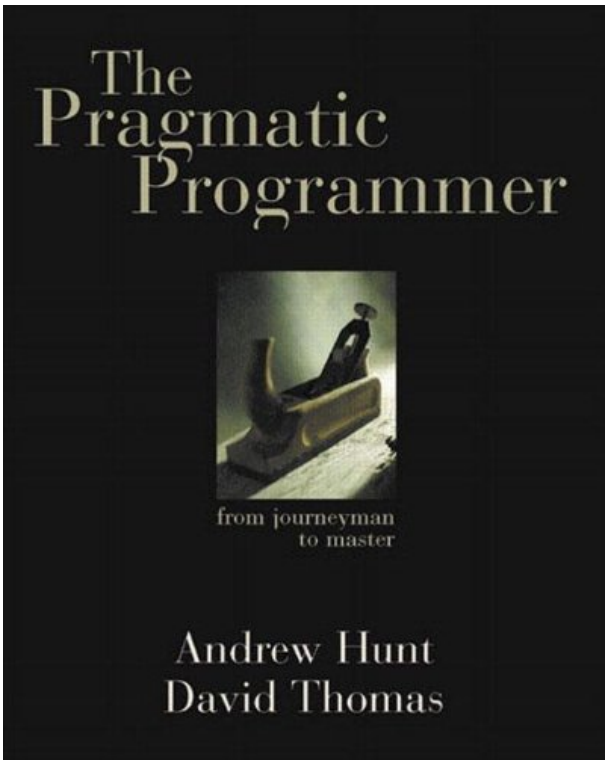
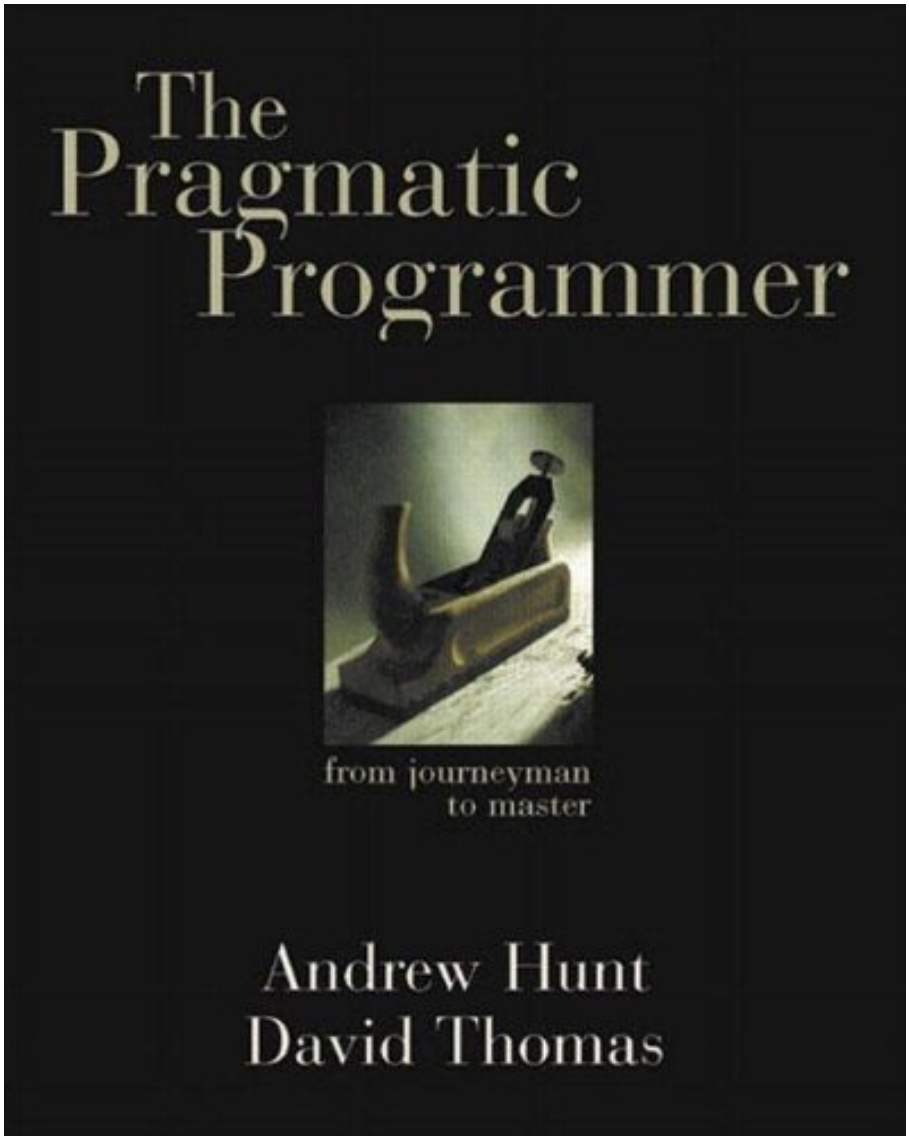
THE PRAGMATIC PROGRAMMER: FROM JOURNEYMAN TO MASTER BY ANDREW HUNT, DAVID THOMAS





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Simply put, this book tells you how to program in a way that you can follow. You wouldn't think that that would be a hard thing to do, but it is. Why? For one thing, not all programming books are written by programmers. Many are compiled by language designers, or the journalists who work with them to promote their creations. Those books tell you how to talk in a programming language---which is certainly important, but that is only a small part of what a programmer does.

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That is just the way Dave and Andy think. That meeting wasn't something keeping them from programming. It was programming. And it was programming that could be improved. I know they think this way because it is tip number two: Think About Your Work.

So imagine that these guys are thinking this way for a few years. Pretty soon they would have a collection of solutions. Now imagine them using their solutions in their work for a few more years, and discarding the ones that are too hard or don't always produce results. Well, that approach just about defines pragmatic. Now imagine them taking a year or two more to write their solutions down. You might think, That information would be a gold mine. And you would be right.

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-- Ward Cunningham Straight from the programming trenches, The Pragmatic Programmer cuts through the increasing specialization and technicalities of modern software development to examine the core process--taking a requirement and producing working, maintainable code that delights its users. It covers topics ranging from personal responsibility and career development to architectural techniques for keeping your code flexible and easy to adapt and reuse. Read this book, and youll learn how to *Fight software rot; *Avoid the trap of duplicating knowledge; *Write flexible, dynamic, and adaptable code; *Avoid programming by coincidence; *Bullet-proof your code with contracts, assertions, and exceptions; *Capture real requirements; *Test ruthlessly and effectively; *Delight your users; *Build teams of pragmatic programmers; and *Make your developments more precise with automation. Written as a series of self-contained sections and filled with entertaining anecdotes, thoughtful examples, and interesting analogies, The Pragmatic Programmer illustrates the best practices and major pitfalls of many different aspects of software development. Whether youre a new coder, an experienced programm

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Most helpful customer reviews

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful.
Inconsistent, but some gems.
By James Leibert
The good:
- The advice on metaprogramming is probably the strongest part of the book. I really liked the clarity of the examples. The key idea is that you should program the structure and methods in code, and provide the detailed implementation (business rules, algorithms etc.) as data.
- The advice on code generators, little languages and plain text interfaces is solid advice worth reiterating and the sections on these are good. However, I preferred the treatment offered by Jon Bentley in his really excellent Programming Pearls books
- The section on automation is a healthy reminder that programmers should have a "do it once, or automate" philosophy
- The section on contract-driven development is worthy and echoes current practice. Jon Bentley's version is a more theoretical, conceptual approach, less polluted by particular industry practices.
- The sections on test-driven development is fine, but the ideas are much better handled by Kent Beck's

books

The not so good:
- The chapters on Pragmatism, Specification, Team Work and Discipline fit nicely with the general themes of the book, but say very little of practical value. If you are interested in operating in a team environment, this isn't the book you are looking for.
- The section on programming methodologies is so wishy-washy it's hard to know what advice if any to take away from it
- References to specific resources are somewhat out of date (the book was written 15 years ago)

The Pragmatic Programmer is worth the price, but if you are thinking of buying this book because you are a relatively new programmer and are looking for advice, I would strongly suggest first reading the much better books:
Jon Bentley's Programming Pearls and More Programming Pearls
Kernighan and Pike's The Practice of Programming
Kent Beck's Extreme Programming Explained

Another book you might be interested in is Susan Lammers, Programmers at Work. Although it is very old (1989), its interesting that most of the programmers interviewed discuss exactly the same themes picked up in The Pragmatic Programmer.

In case you were also thinking about buying a copy of Code Complete, which is also often recommended to new programmers, also hold off - its far too long and a great deal of it feels like a padded-out outline.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.
Too broad and rather outdated
By Gunnar Lium
This book reads like a braindump of all the topics the authors thought could be relevant, with from a few paragraphs to few pages of details on each. It would benefit from much tighter editing, and just a lot fewer topics.

Also, I find it rather annoying how they attempt to establish "pragmatic programmer" as a _thing_. Being pragmatic has it's virtues, but the way they constantly write "a pragmatic programmers does X and Y" is for the most part not at all related to pragmatism, but rather common sense and/or being professional. A pragmatic writer would skip the whole pragmatic programmer agenda, and focus on the content instead.

Furthermore, this book has not aged well. Quite of lot ot the principles are well established today, and many topics are either too focused on specific software, or just plain absurd in their obviousness. (eg. you should use a code editor with syntax highlighting, because that makes it easier to see when you write something wrong).

I would recommended reading "Clean Coder" by Robert C. Martin a hundred times more than this book, and having read that (and perhaps it's companion "Clean Code"), I don't think you would pick up anything new and valuable from this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
Programming Meets Self-Improvement
By William P Ross
This book discusses ways in which you can improve yourself as a software engineer. The variety of topics is decent, ranging from general tips, tools, programming, and projects. The book was published in 1999, so it's

quite old at the point, but most of the tips are still relevant today.

One chapter I enjoyed was Chapter 5 which is titled "Your Knowledge Portfolio". It discusses how your knowledge is like an expiring asset, because technologies grow old quickly. Many of the points stress how you invest in yourself regularly to learn new technologies. An analogy is given to investing that "Diversification is the key to long-term success". In the context of programming it means not being cornered into a niche technology because you were not learning.

Some of the tips many programmers will be familiar with such as DRY (Don't Repeat Yourself). The authors provide a balanced opinion of many topics from their experience. While many of the stories are anecdotal, it is to be expected in this sort of book.

I also give a lot of credit to this being one of the first books to describe the meta-view perspective of programming. The authors want to help you become better at your craft.

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