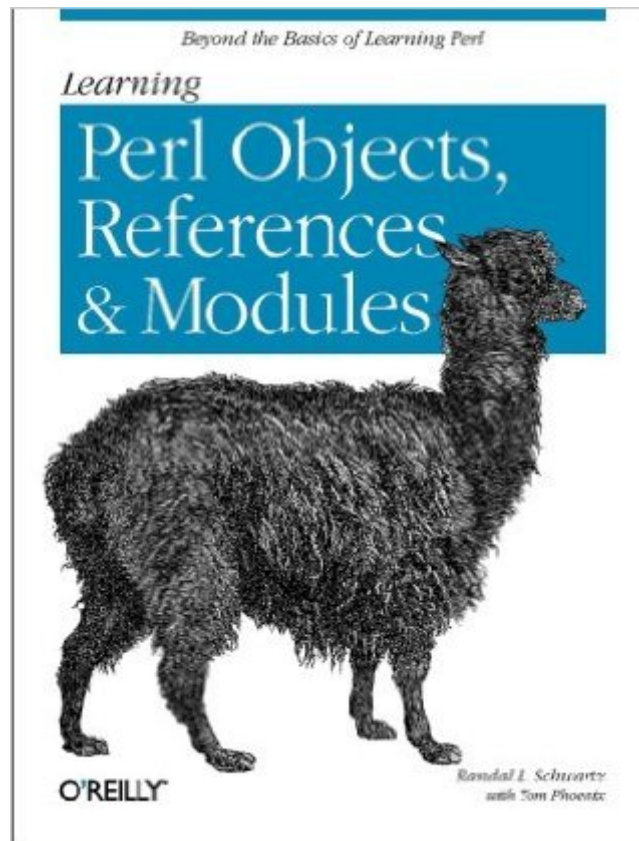


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# Learning Perl Objects, References, And Modules



## Synopsis

Perl is a versatile, powerful programming language used in a variety of disciplines, ranging from system administration to web programming to database manipulation. One slogan of Perl is that it makes easy things easy and hard things possible. This book is about making the leap from the easy things to the hard ones. *Learning Perl Objects, References & Modules* offers a gentle but thorough introduction to advanced programming in Perl. Written by the authors of the best-selling *Learning Perl*, this book picks up where that book left off. Topics include: Packages and namespaces References and scoping Manipulating complex data structures Object-oriented programming Writing and using modules Contributing to CPAN Following the successful format of *Learning Perl*, each chapter in the book is designed to be small enough to be read in just an hour or two, ending with a series of exercises to help you practice what you've learned. To use the book, you just need to be familiar with the material in *Learning Perl* and have ambition to go further. Perl is a different language to different people. It is a quick scripting tool for some, and a fully-featured object-oriented language for others. It is used for everything from performing quick global replacements on text files, to crunching huge, complex sets of scientific data that take weeks to process. Perl is what you make of it. But regardless of what you use Perl for, this book helps you do it more effectively, efficiently, and elegantly. *Learning Perl Objects, References & Modules* is about learning to use Perl as a programming language, and not just a scripting language. This is the book that separates the Perl dabbler from the Perl programmer.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In the world of Perl there was once only the 'camel book,' held in perhaps as much reverence as 'K & R' among C programmers. It certainly appealed to roughly the same audience, those who wanted a short, sharp introduction to a programming language. It was with a problem that needed solving and a copy of the camel book that I started as a Perl programmer. Then for those that wanted an introduction to Perl and programming Randal L. Schwartz wrote Learning Perl, a book that has arguably become the definitive textbook for teaching Perl. The one weakness was that it left off before really getting to the guts of building large, complex projects in Perl. It did not cover classes, objects, breaking your code up into pieces or the more arcane aspects of variables, references. For this we had to resort to the last few chapters of the 'camel book' and I, for one, have never really been totally comfortable at this end of the language; when I'm reading someone else's code it might take a couple of reads to fully understand the process. Now this weakness has been well and truly addressed. Schwartz, with Tom Phoenix, has written "Learning Perl Objects, References & Modules", a volume that takes the same steady approach to teaching you the more advanced topics as the earlier 'Learning Perl'. Schwartz has spent the years since writing 'Learning Perl' teaching and writing. You can tell, this is a superbly written book, not that 'Learning Perl' wasn't well written; it's just that this volume is far better. The Guts The book starts with a chapter on building larger programs that covers @INC, eval, do and require before discussing packages and scope.

"Learning Perl Objects, References and Modules" is the sequel to "Learning Perl". It starts off where "Learning Perl" finished. In "Learning Perl" I learned how to write Perl programs. In "Learning Perl Objects" I learned how to write better and bigger Perl programs. The audience of this book is the advanced Perl Programmer that wants to improve his Perl knowledge in the area of OO programming. If you want to use Perl's OO functions, you have to know a lot about references and modules / packages (an OO package is just a normal package that is called in OO fashion). The first couple of chapters (chapter 1-7) talk about these basics of Perl OO programming that can (and should) be used even without using OO. I love chapter 5 about complex data structures. The chapters 8-11 describe the Perl OO implementation. Further Meta information about how to program packages, CPAN and testing is provided in the chapters 12-15. The setup of the book is didactically very good and the nicely "incremental". You can see that the authors developed this book out of courses that they have held and improved for a long time. Because the book provides a nice stepwise introduction into the subject, one should read it from beginning to end. To really practice the newly learned skills, Tom and Randal provide some example exercises (with solutions in the

appendix) at the end of every chapter. Although I am not a native English speaker, I found the book very readable and humorous. Again this is another O'Reilly book that presents a possibly dry subject in a very accessible way. Even though the explanations are very good, be prepared to read some chapters twice (or more) to get your "aha" moment.

Last Fall I attended a session on object oriented programming with Objective-C. When discussing various languages with object oriented capabilities, the speaker remarked, "Don't even talk to me about Perl." Many people feel that way about Perl without even having to talk about object oriented programming. Randall Schwartz and Tom Phoenix, the authors of the Perl primer "Learning Perl", take on the task of talking about Perl and object oriented programming. Since Perl does not have object orientation as its principal structure, they have a significant task to pull off. In the Foreword of "Learning Perl Objects, References and Modules" Damian Conway draws attention to Perl's particular magic in implementing object oriented programming: "[Perl] takes a collection of Perl's existing non-OO features...and then--with nothing up its sleeve--manages to conjure up fully functional objects, classes and methods." This particular nature of Perl shows up in the nature of the book's content. "Learning Perl Objects, References and Modules" is not about why or when to use object oriented programming in Perl. It is about how to magically turn references and anonymous data structures into object oriented programming. In that way, it is more of a tactical book than a strategic book. The history and concepts behind object oriented programming are touched on only lightly in its 180 pages; however, the book follows a steady progression to the goal of making and distributing Perl modules. Eagerly anticipating the publication of the book, I bought it as soon as it was available. I reaped immediate benefit from the first few chapters as they demonstrated how to accomplish the goals I had for a project that I was working on. I lost interest shortly after chapter 4.

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