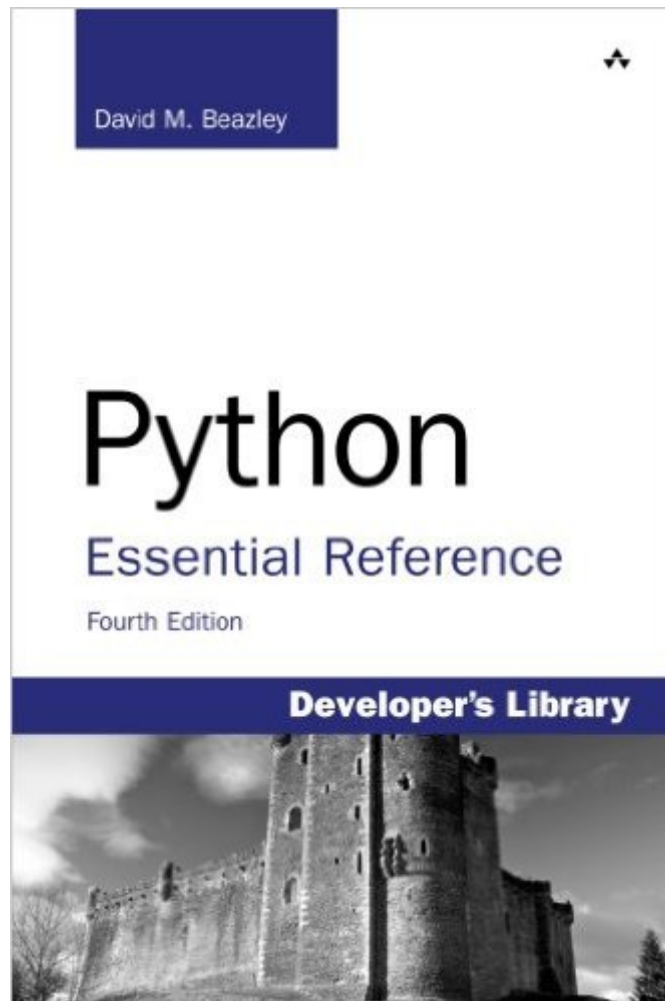


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Python Essential Reference (4th Edition)



Synopsis

Python Essential Reference is the definitive reference guide to the Python programming language – the one authoritative handbook that reliably untangles and explains both the core Python language and the most essential parts of the Python library. Designed for the professional programmer, the book is concise, to the point, and highly accessible. It also includes detailed information on the Python library and many advanced subjects that is not available in either the official Python documentation or any other single reference source. Thoroughly updated to reflect the significant new programming language features and library modules that have been introduced in Python 2.6 and Python 3, the fourth edition of Python Essential Reference is the definitive guide for programmers who need to modernize existing Python code or who are planning an eventual migration to Python 3. Programmers starting a new Python project will find detailed coverage of contemporary Python programming idioms. This fourth edition of Python Essential Reference features numerous improvements, additions, and updates: Coverage of new language features, libraries, and modules Practical coverage of Python's more advanced features including generators, coroutines, closures, metaclasses, and decorators Expanded coverage of library modules related to concurrent programming including threads, subprocesses, and the new multiprocessing module Up-to-the-minute coverage of how to use Python 2.6's forward compatibility mode to evaluate code for Python 3 compatibility Improved organization for even faster answers and better usability Updates to reflect modern Python programming style and idioms Updated and improved example code Deep coverage of low-level system and networking library modules – including options not covered in the standard documentation

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Customer Reviews

David Beazley's "Python Essential Reference, Fourth Edition" covers Python 2.6 and 3.0, and is thus quite (though not completely) up to date. The author has in essence chosen to present the intersection of the two branches, i.e. omit features of Python 2 that have been removed from Python 3. This volume's pace is rapid and the coverage is quite extensive, so this probably shouldn't be the first Python book one reads. The Good: this book is approximately 700 pages long; even so, it's not that bulky and is therefore quite manageable. It is split into two parts: 200 pages on the language and roughly 400 pages on the library. The first part is very good, while the second part is unrivaled as of this writing (though this may change when Doug Hellmann's "The Python Standard Library by Example" comes out). Thus, the reader essentially gets two books for the price of one: the part on the language can be read linearly, while the library part can be read in chunks as the need arises. The book also includes an extremely useful Index which is approximately 80 pages long (and also contains unexpected entries, e.g. "chicken, multithreaded, 414"). Moving on to the material covered: Beazley includes an appendix on Python 3-specific concepts, but also offers useful advice on Python 3 throughout the main text (e.g. "To keep your brain from exploding, encoded byte strings and unencoded strings should never be mixed together in expressions"). I particularly enjoyed the sections on decorators, generators, and coroutines in the chapter on functional programming. Beazley has also posted on his website two tutorials on these topics that nicely complement the material in the book.

The author of Python Essential Reference is David Beazley, who among other occupations created the open-source SWIG tool and the WAD mixed-languages debugger. His background is pervading throughout the book, in which the reader gets a clear sense of what is happening behind the Python programming language and learns how to use it efficiently instead of considering it as a black box. The first 20 pages give an overview of the language and although it is called a "tutorial introduction", it should be understood that its purpose is for a programmer to see what Python looks like, and not for a novice to get their first programming course. The next 156 pages offer a thorough review of the language and its environment. This is a very interesting part and should not be skipped even by people who already know Python. I said "review" but an experienced programmer should be able to learn the language by reading those chapters and putting them into practice with

extra exercises. Instead of simply describing the language, the author also hands out tricks of the trade, showing how to acquire good coding habits while using a sensible approach regarding the performance, which is often essential in a dynamic language. The fourth edition is focusing on version 2.6 but offers some historical perspective by pointing out several elements that were recently improved, or which are about to change in upcoming versions. The first part of the book concludes with useful recommendations on program debugging and profiling. The second part contains 388 pages and goes through the Python library, presenting the essential modules together with examples, notes and advices. After all, this is a reference, so we shouldn't expect any less.

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