

▶ **Book review**

Java Precisely

by Peter Sestoft

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128 pages

Java Precisely is a delightful little book. In just over one hundred pages, the author presents a practical, concise roadmap/reference for the Java language. It is precisely right for the Java programmer who, every now and then, needs to find an answer quickly to a basic Java question such as "What's the right syntax for declaring and initializing an array?" This is something you may know when you first learn Java but not be able to recall quickly later; because Java has so many other collection classes, you might not use arrays that often. Fortunately, the answer is readily available in this book.

If you work like I do, you have the Java SDK or J2EE SDK API in a browser window as you code. That provides the documentation you need to figure out how to best use the rich set of classes in your application. But when you come up against a seemingly simple question about the language itself, the API documentation does not help. Off you go, to find all the different Java programming books you have accumulated, thumb through their indexes, and hopefully find the information you need. But typically, the precise information you are seeking is surrounded by a lot of "helpful" text, because the book is probably designed for someone just learning the Java language.

Java Precisely has the information you need in a form that is much more usable for experienced Java programmers. Although I may never look at some of the twenty short chapters again, I will regularly visit others, such as the individual chapters on types, arrays, classes, exceptions, threads, collections and maps, and input and output. The latter covers not only the file I/O, but also threads, sockets, and other things that you may not use as often.

One very nice feature is that the book has plenty of examples. Also, it is formatted with general language rules on the left page and examples

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illustrating those rules on the facing page. So, if I'm looking up something for which I need details, I look at the leftpage. If I just have a quick syntax question, the right page provides all I need.

I am not about to get rid of the dozen or so other Java books I have -- some may cover other territory, because the Java platform is just that big. But I am sure to keep *Java Precisely* in a very accessible location whenever I find myself writing Java code. It's precisely the right book for me.

-Gary Pollice

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