

Re: comments (was Re: A critic of Guido's blog on Python's lambda)

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- *From:* keke@xxxxxxx (Takehiko Abe)
 - *Date:* Tue, 16 May 2006 00:17:17 +0900
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Ken Tilton wrote:

Absolutely. When I take over someone else's code I begin by deleting all the comments. Then I read the code.

Is this a great programming tip I've never heard before? Or a mere joke?

Somewhere in between. I do not recall ever sweeping through an entire code base deleting all the comments, I just delete them from stretches of code on which I have to work so I can see the damn code.

Somehow I thought you wrote that you delete code without reading them. But you didn't. It was in my head.

Recall that most people write horribly, and that natural language is anyway naturally ambiguous. Note also that comments do not run, code runs. Comments do not always (often? ever?) get maintained. Some comments state the obvious, especially for folks from the comment-every-line school, and do no more than obscure the landscape. Finally, if I am now the maintainer of a project, guess what? If there is any non-obvious code I need to understand it, and, yeah, I know how to read code.

Code only tells what it does. Sometimes it doesn't tell (or is not obvious) why it does what it does.

Recently I put lots of comments to explain why those ugly codes are necessary — it's because of buggy API calls. (They are not my faults.) And you delete them? I weep. You must give me a chance to explain!

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As I said, if the code is not readable, rectification of names is an entertaining and insanely productive way of studying code. Just reading it puts one to sleep.

kenneth