

Re: Rethinking the Python tutorial

Source: <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Python/comp.lang.python/2006-02/msg02380.html>

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JW wrote:

I started with the official tutorial. It seemed up to date to me.
Things that changed from 2.4 to 2.5 changed in the tutorial as well.

Agreed. I mainly felt that A Byte of Python seems to go through the features in Python in a more systematic way. The official tutorial is being kept up to date concerning details, but it's basically the same text as ten years ago. I think we owe a lot of gratitude to Fred Drake and all the other people who have put a lot of efforts into the tutorial, but it's too much to expect that they would transform it significantly. It was written a long time ago, with different users, use cases and features in mind.

If we would really get a user guide, I guess there is less reason to have a differently organized tutorial though. Today, I guess we suffer from the fact that the tutorial is the only place to describe things that don't fit in the library reference in a user-oriented way. Yet, the tutorial is not organized as a reference, and from the purely tutorial point of view, it wouldn't have to be complete.

I haven't tried "A Byte of Python", so I can't comment.

Please do. I've been programming Python since 1996, so I'm really just guessing when I try to judge material for beginners. My impression is that it's a good and well organized tutorial.

I tried to learn from "Dive into Python", but I found that it went too quickly.

Right. I would not suggest replacing the official tutorial with that. I see it more as a complement.

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"Dive into Python" is not being kept up to date. The last revision was May 2004, and several things have changed since then.

Ok. There are two issues here I guess.

First of all, any official material needs to be kept up to date, whether it's the old tutorial or a new one. It might be too much to maintain both A Byte of Python and one more text if we change tutorial(s).

Secondly, since Dive into Python goes beyond the core of Python, with dependencies to third party stuff, I guess it's more costly to maintain.

Perhaps it was a bad suggestion to include that. Thanks for your feedback.

I think the most important thing for a tutorial is a consistent style and a consistent idea of the user's capabilities. This is easiest with a single maintainer, but requires constant diligence and a subdued ego for a collaborative document.

On the other hand, one size doesn't fit all. Thus my suggestion of two texts. With the 60+ links that I mentioned before, I don't think the current way newbies are guided to tutorials is ideal. There is too much to choose from and too little guidance for those who try to figure out where to go. The information is also spread out too much.

<http://python.org/doc/>
<http://python.org/doc/2.4.2/> ==(?) <http://docs.python.org/>
<http://wiki.python.org/moin/BeginnersGuide> + sub pages
<http://www.python.org/doc/Intros.html>
etc...

If the content in these pages were cleaned up significantly (it's like the wardrobes at home—we can't keep all that old stuff just because it isn't broken. Throw out the stuff which isn't essential) I guess we could have less official stuff (e.g. just one tutorial) and clear links to the others.

Perhaps a better approach would be that Dive into Python was one of a smaller set of external links to tutorials, in a cleaned up set of web pages. At least, it's not a problem today that there are too few online Python tutorials on the web.

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