

## Re: Good debugger?

**Source:** <http://coding.derkeiler.com/Archive/Tcl/comp.lang.tcl/2003-11/0807.html>

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**From:** Roy Terry (*royterry\_at\_earthlink.net*)

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Bgc wrote:

>

> *Cameron:*

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> *Stepping through a script sequence, one line at a time, and watching  
> the variables change values as you do so is a much better approach to  
> learning a language, in my opinion, then inputing values to a function  
> and observing the output. The "closeness" that you get to the code  
> (or whatever word that you want to use) is achieved by stepping  
> through it with a good debugger. What I really like about RamDebugger  
> is that you change values even while the code is executing (I don't  
> think I've ever seen a debugger do that before).*

Sure, that's true. And yet what's not mentioned is the fact that you already had a debugger mindset and so did not need to work through the concept of one program starting and stopping another which is big conceptual magic not to mention the potential hassle, illustrated in this thread, of getting the debugger happy with your environment and getting it to ingest your source code. (And then there is the vexing possibility that the debugger will subtly interfere with code behavior (or that the user will get confused into suspecting same)).

But on the question of stepping through the code while learning, here's what's not mentioned: Every Tcl console (and especially Tkcon) is a single step tool. I suspect those of us unmotivated to use debuggers just run things at the console a command at a time and see what happens. For example, if I'm writing a complex RE, I just copy/paste to tkcon and can very easily get all the iterations and trials I need before pasting the result back into the source file. So if you say you have ten lines in a row that are all mysterious and so must be debugged, I will say yes happens to me too but not often enough to want to switch to running a separate tool. However, hearing the good words about RamDebugger makes me interested in trying it if I ever do get that stuck.

comp.lang.tcl: Re: Good debugger?

I still think the best \*general\* advice to newbies is to get comfortable with Tkcon.

Cheers,

Roy Terry

(Now debugger free for 5 years – :)

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> > *RamDebugger is indeed a significant achievement. It intrigues me, though, that you regard a debugger as "a must for newbies". That's not the way \*I\**'ve taught Tcl to beginners. What am I depriving them? How would lack of a debugger have impaired your Tcl learning?**