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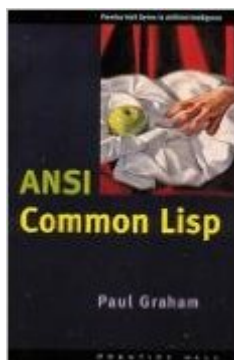
ANSI Common LISP

Synopsis

KEY BENEFIT: Teaching users new and more powerful ways of thinking about programs, this two-in-one text contains a tutorialâ "full of examplesâ "that explains all the essential concepts of Lisp programming, plus an up-to-date summary of ANSI Common Lisp, listing every operator in the language. Informative and fun, it gives users everything they need to start writing programs in Lisp both efficiently and effectively, and highlights such innovative Lisp features as automatic memory management, manifest typing, closures, and more.   Dividing material into two parts, the tutorial half of the book covers subject-by-subject the essential core of Common Lisp, and sums up lessons of preceding chapters in two examples of real applications: a backward-chainer, and an embedded language for object-oriented programming. Consisting of three appendices, the summary half of the book gives source code for a selection of widely used Common Lisp operators, with definitions that offer a comprehensive explanation of the language and provide a rich source of real examples; summarizes some differences between ANSI Common Lisp and Common Lisp as it was originally defined in 1984; and contains a concise description of every function, macro, and special operator in ANSI Common Lisp. The book concludes with a section of notes containing clarifications, references, and additional code.   For computer programmers.

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Customer Reviews

Style: I'm embarrassed to admit that I laughed out loud at some of the jokes embedded in the code

examples. The writing is clear and entertaining (why are Lisp books better in this respect than those of of other languages?).Audience: This should probably not be the first programming book that you read, but it could easily be the second. Graham describes Common Lisp in detail, but assumes no prior knowledge of the language. This is a good book for people learning Lisp independently, for any application. Intermediate-level programmers will benefit from seeing Graham's Lisp style, which emphasizes building utilities to create a 'language' suitable for your problem.Organization: The strongest point. Examples are keyed in well with the text: binary search trees in the data structures chapter, string substitution in the I/O chapter, ray tracing in the numbers chapter, etc. Okay, sure, there's nothing fancy there; obviously writers choose relevant examples. The impressive thing is how the examples are high-quality Lisp programs of the sort that might actually be used, even the ones from the early chapters (before the entire language is available). This is not the most common pedagogical approach, but it works here.Possible shortcomings: There is nothing wrong with the problems per se, but most of them can be solved with very short programs. There are some great large-scale programs towards the end: an roll-your-own object system, an HTML generator, Lisp-in-Lisp; but on the other hand, you're on your own when the time comes to think of projects to try yourself.As far as the reference section goes, it's okay, but why not just use the HyperSpec?

I think this book is terrific. It covers a great deal of ANSI Common Lisp, in a very concise way, and includes some well-chosen, realistic, medium-scale examples. The writing is clear, clever, and often amusing. Most of all, it really gets me excited about the language! Graham does a great job of explaining how all of the language features work to change your approach to programming, and debunking a lot of the myths you hear about the Lisp language.This book is not for everyone; you ought to have experience programming before reading this book. It doesn't hand-hold, leading step-by-step. You will have to pause every few pages to collect your thoughts and try things out. One or two of the sample routines have bugs, at least in my printing. The book is *quite dense* compared to a lot of the 1000+ page language books you see. I think that is a strong point, as it is easy to carry around, even including a capsule reference to the language. Lisp is quite different in style from C/C++/Pascal, so you might experience some culture shock.I find myself picking this book up and reading a page or two, like taking a "Lisp vitamin", even though I've been programming in Lisp for some time now.This book's introduction to Lisp has changed my whole outlook on programming. I hate having to go back to any other language. I also recommend Graham's other book "On Lisp" as a sequel.

This book is a very good introduction to Lisp, as others have adequately explained. However, since it was first published the quantity of good free Lisp reading material on the web has increased. See Practical Common Lisp ([...]) as an example. The $47 expenditure might not be necessary if you just want to learn lisp.My main complaint is the binding on the book. I have not put this book under any unusual stress and the spine is already starting to fall apart after a few weeks of use. This unacceptable for reference book that I would like to use well into the future.

If you come from C/C++/Pascal/Java this book is definitely for you. If you come from Forth, you're already accustomed to a fair part of what Lisp is about, this book will show you the missing bits. If you come from Python/Ruby/Perl, well, welcome!Even though ANSI CL has two chapters (11 and 17) about OO programming, that is, for me, the least interesting part. Coming from Java/C++ I already know most of this stuff (the only important distinction being between message passing -- The Java/C++/Smalltalk way -- and generic function -- the Lisp/Dylan way.What is truly amazing is chapter 15 (inference) which in exactly 10 pages, gives you a toy example (I needed about 30 minutes to type it in) that actually works, and opens your mind to this area that had been deemed, oh, so difficult and esoteric!Not so in Graham's book.Also, in a few pages, he is able to explain to you the fundamentals of ray-tracing, in a way that is simply luminous.I own CLTL2, Winston & Horn and the new Seibel book. I'm sure glad I did add Graham's book to my collection. My only regret is that I took so long to discover it!

With only mild prerequisites in computer science and/or math, Paul Graham gently but quite fully introduces the rudiments of Common Lisp. This was my first Lisp book, recommended to me by a Lisp-fluent student in college when I had to learn the language for an AI class. While I then moved on to more referencial works, like Steele's _Common Lisp: The Language_, Graham is still a foundation for much of the basic grammar, structure, and reasoning behind the form of the language.While Graham does delve into some interesting coding examples in the second half of the book, _ANSI Common LISP_ is not meant to replace a referential or exemplary book concerning the language. If you're looking for a more case-study sort of book, I suggest Norvig's _Paradigms of AI programming_ or Tanimoto's _Elements of Artificial Intelligence_. Both offer a wealth of examples that Graham rightfully omits in order to more broadly cover the fundamentals of the language itself.

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