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# Mastering Perl/Tk: Graphical User Interfaces In Perl



## Synopsis

Perl/Tk is the marriage of the Tk graphical toolkit with Perl, the powerful programming language used primarily for system administration, web programming, and database manipulation. With Perl/Tk, you can build Perl programs with an attractive, intuitive GUI interface with all the power of Perl behind it. Mastering Perl/Tk is the "bible" of Perl/Tk: It's not only a great book for getting started, but the best reference for learning the techniques of experienced Perl/Tk programmers. The first half of the book contains the basics on how to use Perl/Tk, and then branches out into advanced applications with a series of extensive program examples. The result is a book accessible for novices, and invaluable for experienced programmers ready to learn the next step in the elegant and effective use of Perl/Tk. The book includes:

- An introduction to each of the basic Perl/Tk widgets and geometry managers
- A dissection of the MainLoop, including how to use callbacks and bindings effectively
- Coverage of the Tix widgets, an extended set of widgets that are a part of the standard Perl/Tk distribution
- Working with images in Perl/Tk, including bitmaps, pixmaps, photos, and how to compose a compound image type
- How to create custom mega-widgets in Perl/Tk, both composite and derived
- Handling interprocess communication with Perl/Tk, both with standard Unix utilities (pipes and sockets) and with the send command designed for direct communication between Tk applications
- Developing your own Tk widget in the C language
- Examples of web applications written with Perl/Tk and the LWP library

The book also includes appendices on installing Perl/Tk, a complete quick-reference for each standard widget, and listings of all the extended examples in the book. Nancy Walsh is the author of Learning Perl/Tk, and Steve Lidie wrote the Perl/Tk Pocket Reference as well as a series of Perl/Tk articles in The Perl Journal. Together, they have written Mastering Perl/Tk to be the definitive guide to Perl/Tk.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Fortunately, this book didn't disappoint me, it lived up to all the hype I'd heard, and had begun to anticipate, two months before it was available. The index and table of contents are excellent (a must for any good reference book). The index seems very thorough and takes up about 30 pages. The table of contents, and thus the book, is laid out in a manner that makes it easy to find topics/subtopics of interest. There is a 60-page appendix table "Options and Default Values for Each Widget" which I've already placed a stickem on for quick reference. The appendix would have been even more invaluable if each widget (and possibly some lesser used/known attributes) had a page number reference so one doesn't have to find an entry there, and then have to look it up a second time in the index to find more details. There is also another appendix that contains complete program listings for fun/useful programs like progress bars, MP3 player, RPN calculator, etc. They are useful as extensive examples of Perl/Tk code, if nothing else. The only downside is that there are no electronic copies (CD or web links) to these programs and some are rather lengthy. Although I consider myself a beginner with Perl/Tk, I believe that it will also serve as an invaluable reference to advanced users of Perl/Tk and have heard from at least one or two experienced users via chat that it is far superior to Nancy Walsh's first book Learning Perl/Tk. I browsed the first book and opted not to purchase it, but this book is well worth the price. Note to the reviewer from Peoria. Did you mean to review the pocket reference instead of the full book? Otherwise, your last comment about "moving up" to Mastering Perl/Tk doesn't make any sense in relation to the rest of your review.

This book has so far given me all the information I've needed to write usable GUIs. However, I share the concern expressed by other reviewers that the titles 'Learning Perl/Tk' and 'Mastering Perl/Tk' can be misleading. While it's reasonable to assume that the 'Learning' volume is introductory/tutorial while the 'Mastering' volume is for advanced techniques, this is not the case. The 'History of this Book' section of the preface describes it as an expansion of 'Learning Perl/Tk', not a sequel or supplement. There is no need to buy both books.

I picked this book up and learned enough from it to write (in a few weeks) a nice little GUI-based data display program that's being used to monitor train schedule adherence at the US's

second-largest subway system. So obviously the book is useful. But it's also a bit frustrating. The index is almost completely useless; 90% of the time I do not find anything remotely related to the word on the page that it's supposed to be on. Sometimes if I go back and forth a dozen pages I think I find the actual page. There are a fair number of typos that I discovered (most of which are, admittedly, corrected on O'Reilly's web site.) There's this bizarre example of having two MainWindows in the same application, something that mislead \*me\* into trying the same thing before I discovered how awfully awkward it was. So while the book was excellent for getting me "jump-started" into the world of Perl/Tk, I do not use it much as a reference anymore. Now that I know the ropes, the man pages get me to the information much more quickly than this book.

Fortunately, this book didn't disappoint me, it lived up to all the hype I'd heard, and had begun to anticipate, two months before it was available. The index and table of contents are excellent (a must for any good reference book). The index seems very thorough and takes up about 30 pages. The table of contents, and thus the book, is laid out in a manner that makes it easy to find topics/subtopics of interest. There is a 60-page appendix table "Options and Default Values for Each Widget" which I've already placed a stickem on for quick reference. The appendix would have been even more invaluable if each widget (and possibly some lesser used/known attributes) had a page number reference so one doesn't have to find an entry there, and then have to look it up a second time in the index to find more details. There is also another appendix that contains complete program listings for fun/useful programs like progress bars, MP3 player, RPN calculator, etc. They are useful as extensive examples of Perl/Tk code, if nothing else. The only downside is that there are no electronic copies (CD or web links) to these programs and some are rather lengthy. Although I consider myself a beginner with Perl/Tk, I believe that it will also serve as an invaluable reference to advanced users of Perl/Tk and have heard from at least one or two experienced users via chat that it is far superior to Nancy Walsh's first book Learning Perl/Tk. I browsed the first book and opted not to purchase it, but this book is well worth the price. Note to the reviewer from Medford, OR: Did you mean to review the pocket reference instead of the full book? Otherwise, your last comment about "moving up" to Mastering Perl/Tk doesn't make any sense in relation to the rest of your review.

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