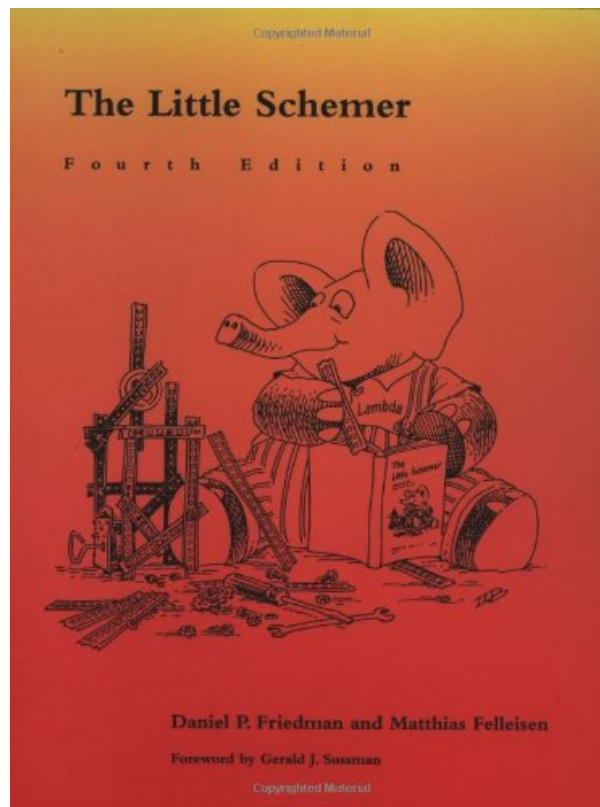


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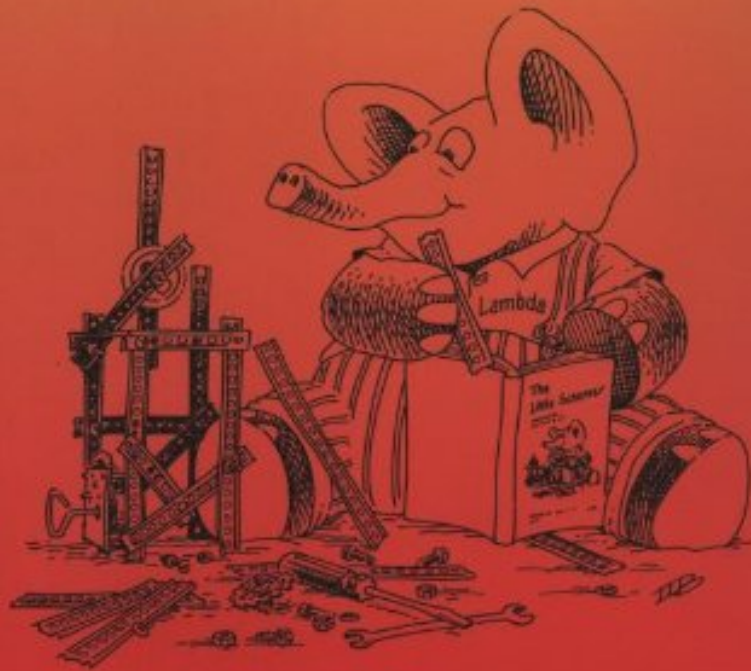
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Daniel P. Friedman and Matthias Felleisen

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Amazon.com Review

This delightful book leads you through the basic elements of programming in Scheme (a Lisp dialect) via a series of dialogues with well-chosen questions and exercises. Besides teaching Scheme, The Little Schemer teaches the reader how to think about computation. The authors focus on ten essential concepts of thinking about how to compute and demonstrate how to apply these concepts in inventive ways. The Little Schemer is an excellent book both for the beginner and for the seasoned programmer.

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I learned more about LISP from this book than I have from any of the other LISP books I've read over the years...While other books will tell you the mechanics of LISP, they can leave you largely uninformed on the style of problem-solving for which LISP is optimized. The Little LISPer teaches you how to think in the LISP language...an inexpensive, enjoyable introduction.

(Gregg Williams Byte)

From the Back Cover

The notion that "thinking about computing is one of the most exciting things the human mind can do" sets both The Little Schemer (formerly known as The Little LISPer) and its new companion volume, The Seasoned Schemer, apart from other books on LISP. The authors' enthusiasm for their subject is compelling as they present abstract concepts in a humorous and easy-to-grasp fashion. Together, these books will open new doors of thought to anyone who wants to find out what computing is really about. The Little Schemer introduces computing as an extension of arithmetic and algebra - things that everyone studies in grade school and high school. It introduces programs as recursive functions and briefly discusses the limits of what computers can do. The authors use the programming language Scheme and a menu of interesting foods to illustrate these abstract ideas. The Seasoned Schemer introduces the reader to additional dimensions of computing: functions as values, change of state, and exceptional cases. The Little LISPer has been a popular introduction to LISP for many years. It has appeared in French and Japanese. The Little Schemer and The Seasoned Schemer are worthy successors and will prove equally popular as textbooks for Scheme courses as well as companion texts for any complete introductory course in Computer Science.

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Most helpful customer reviews

81 of 83 people found the following review helpful.

charming and delightful but also massively mind-stretching

By Michael Vanier

This is a wonderful book for people who enjoy having their minds stretched. It starts from the most elementary concepts (this is a number, this is a symbol) and then proceeds to teach you how to program in scheme (a lisp dialect) using a question-and-answer approach, with the questions on the left hand side of the page and the answers on the right. Most of the teaching is by example; the authors show you something several times in several different guises in order to get you to understand the pattern underlying the programming examples. This form of teaching-by-pattern-recognition is especially useful for scheme, because lisp-based languages represent such a different paradigm from more conventional computer languages that it really helps to have the pattern in mind when you want to write a new function. The authors show how the basic elements of lisp (atoms, numbers and lists) can be used to solve an amazing variety of problems, many of which would be much harder (or impossible) in more conventional computer languages. Most of the book is so easy that a complete novice who had never programmed before could understand it, but the authors sneakily keep increasing the complexity until in the last three chapters they cover continuation-passing style, the applicative-order Y combinator (!) and writing a scheme interpreter in scheme (!!). Some of these topics would go over the head of most computer science Ph.D.'s (go ahead, ask one what the Y combinator is -- I dare you!). This is not the book to read if you're looking for a "teach yourself visual basic in 20 minutes" kind of book, but if you like programming and you enjoy having your mind stretched, you could not do better than this book (or its companion book, *The Seasoned Schemer*).

68 of 70 people found the following review helpful.

a reminder of older, cleverer times

By A Customer

I am reading this book now, after wanting to get back into LISP programming after a ten year hiatus. My last memory of LISP was when I learned it in high school with an excellent teacher. I wish we had had this book back then! As it stands, I devoured the book in a few sittings -- its amusing, fast paced, rigorous and low-BS structure make it an excellent read.

I'm of the last generation of students who were able to switch on a computer and get a BASIC prompt. The huge heft of "introductory" programming books today leaves me cold and uninspired -- I would hate to have seen these when I was first exploring the excitement of programming.

The Little Schemer, by some of the old gurus of the (I believe) MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab (if not that particular lab, then at least those early, heady days in the '70s when AI wasn't a joke), reminded me of what it used to be like -- slowly building up a repertoire of commands and associated concepts that made

programming seem a lot more like playing a Bach fugue and a lot less like debugging window objects. Things like recursion -- the essential part of this book -- are inherently wonderful.

Were I teaching an advanced class for high school students, this book would be at the top of my list. Were I wanting to introduce a liberal arts student into the joys of mathematics, this book would be at the top. Were I wanting to deprogram a bad-habited CS student, this book. Indeed, with so many Universities wanting to stuff some kind of logical, syntactical reasoning requirements into their required courses, this book should be a best seller.

It is a book that recaptures the joys and frustrations of programming and goes a long way to explaining why so many of the brightest people of the 20th century, at some point or another, sat down and cons'ed up a list.

14 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

Brilliant Primer, But Not a Reference

By Jon E. Gordon

The Little Schemer is most emphatically not a reference to the Scheme programming language. Nor will it tell you how to get your Scheme Interpreter to print "Hello World!" These are not flaws, though, any more than my TV's inability to cook a TV dinner is a flaw.

The Little Schemer is written to teach you how to think about programming using recursion, which is the natural way to program in Scheme. And at this, it succeeds brilliantly. It starts with the simplest ideas and then proceeds inductively from those elements to develop programming patterns.

Few people find it natural to think in terms of recursive functions. Scheme's programming style may seem even more foreign to those who have done all their coding in procedural languages, such as C, Java, and Visual Basic. The value of The Little Schemer is in the way it transforms the unnatural into the natural.

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