

Tricks of the Trade

Or

Thirty years of experience is not one year of experience repeated 30 times.

Tricks of the Trade

- When it comes to source code,
 - Who's the audience?
 - Who will read it?
 - What not to do?
 - What to do?

Who's the Audience?

- There are two audiences:
 - The computer as a compiler or interpreter.
Most programmers concentrate on this audience and ignore the second.
 - Other people.
Other people are the forgotten second audience.

Who Will Read it?

- **Maintenance programmers** (“Bob’s work is almost complete, just add ...”)
- **Forensic engineers** (“This worked on the VAX, make it work with Windows”)
- **Your boss** (reading a comment “#@! demands I add this garbage ...”)
- **Judges and Lawyers** (“Even casual examination of the code reveals Mr. Jones was negligent...”)

What NOT to do?

- Don't use juvenile identifiers.

Use descriptive identifiers.

- Don't write embarrassing comments.

Don't write comments you'd be embarrassed to have your mother read.

- Don't write obfuscated code.

Good code communicates clearly. If code fails that task, it's worthless!

- Don't write tricky code.

If it's tricky, it won't be understood!

- Don't personalize your code

Keep your ego out of your code!

What to do?

- Rules of thumb:
 - Write for clarity
 - Have someone else read your code and comments
If other programmers don't understand your code, do you?
 - Write for maintainability
 - Read your code and comments
Coding for speed or memory efficiency can be done later -- if needed.
 - And write the user-manual
 - Your code's perfect, now demonstrate it from the end-user's point of view.