

Acquiring a Taste for UNIX.

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It seems as if the world is divided into two camps, those who swear by Unix, and those who swear at it. Many people attribute this to either an extremely steep learning curve that Unix requires, or to the belief that Unix is inaccessible only to programmers. But counterexamples abound! While some scientists shun the operating system others embrace it, and while many programmers have trouble becoming adept in programming in a Unix environment, students pick up Unix quite easily. More than anything, the success a person has in adapting to Unix seems to be more closely related to the attitudes of the novice and the training he or she receives. This course tries to present Unix as an environment which is neither easy nor hard to learn, but which can be used by many people quite casually with a great deal of success.

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Cornerstones of Unix

Design Unix was designed by a small (<6) group of people essentially for their own use! No commercial gain was anticipated.

The Times

- * Interactive Programming
- * Structured Programming
- * Elements of Style
- * Software Tools

Simplicity

- * The file system is a model of simplicity. Every file is readable by ordinary programs (including directories!). There is nothing in a file that the user or program didn't put there.
- * The utilities are not a part of the operating system proper. Most utilities are tools - that is they are small and simple - each does one thing well.

Software

- * Source was readily distributed in machine readable form (as opposed to microfiche).
Most commands are decidedly non-chatty. The purpose is so that programs may communicate with other programs.

Documentation

- * For too many things, the source is considered the documentation
- * Most things are well documented (but not demonstrated).
- * All manuals and research papers are on-line and accessible by the Unix tools!
- * The original aim was that you could carry all of the documentation in a brief case. You can.

Users

Unix has always stressed communication between users of the system and a sharing of code and other resources. (Few Unix systems implement disk quotas, but prefer to rely upon asking people to clean up a bit.)