

Alan Perlis

Quotes

*Learning, Programming, Language, Thinking, Computer, Technology, Mean,
Program, Writing, Machines, Fun, Computing, Errors, Needs, Programming
Languages, Men, Today, Doe, Two, Humorous*

A year spent in artificial intelligence is enough to make one believe in God.

~Alan Perlis

Adapting old programs to fit new machines usually means adapting new machines to behave like old ones.

~Alan Perlis

Fools ignore complexity. Pragmatists suffer it. Some can avoid it. Geniuses remove it.

~Alan Perlis

When someone says, "I want a programming language in which I need only say what I want done," give him a lollipop.

~Alan Perlis

It is better to have 100 functions operate on one data structure than to have 10 functions operate on 10 data structures.

~Alan Perlis

In software systems it is often the early bird that makes the worm.

~Alan Perlis

There are two ways to write error-free programs; only the third one works.

~Alan Perlis

A programming language is low level when its programs require attention to the irrelevant.

~Alan Perlis

Syntactic sugar causes cancer of the semicolon.

~Alan Perlis

If your computer speaks English, it was probably made in Japan.

~Alan Perlis

A language that doesn't affect the way you think about programming is not worth knowing.

~Alan Perlis

Simplicity does not precede complexity, but follows it.

~Alan Perlis

Every program has (at least) two purposes: the one for which it was written and another for which it wasn't.

~Alan Perlis

One man's constant is another man's variable.

~Alan Perlis

To understand a program, you must become both the machine and the program.

~Alan Perlis

Motto for a research laboratory: what we work on today, others will first think of tomorrow.

~Alan Perlis

Programmers are not to be measured by their ingenuity and their logic but by the completeness of their case analysis.

~Alan Perlis

Don't have good ideas if you aren't willing to be responsible for them.

~Alan Perlis

Dealing with failure is easy: Work hard to improve. Success is also easy to handle: You've solved the wrong problem. Work hard to

improve.

~Alan Perlis

In the long run, every program becomes rococo, and then rubble.

~Alan Perlis

Computer Science is embarrassed by the computer.

~Alan Perlis

In English every word can be verbed.

~Alan Perlis

Optimization hinders evolution.

~Alan Perlis

We toast the Lisp programmer who pens his thoughts within nests of parentheses.

~Alan Perlis

In computing, turning the obvious into the useful is a living definition of the word "frustration".

~Alan Perlis

I think it is inevitable that people program poorly. Training will not substantially help matters. We have to learn to live with it.

~Alan Perlis

Because of its vitality, the computing field is always in desperate need of new cliches: Banality soothes our nerves.

~Alan Perlis

C programmers never die. They are just cast into void.

~Alan Perlis

In man-machine symbiosis, it is man who must adjust: The machines can't.

~Alan Perlis

Is it possible that software is not like anything else, that it is meant to be discarded: that the whole point is to always see it as a soap bubble?

~Alan Perlis

When a professor insists computer science is X but not Y, have compassion for his graduate students.

~Alan Perlis

It is easier to change the specification to fit the program than vice versa.

~Alan Perlis

Some programming languages manage to absorb change, but withstand progress.

~Alan Perlis

You can measure a programmer's perspective by noting his attitude on the continuing vitality of FORTRAN.

~Alan Perlis

You think you KNOW when you learn, are more sure when you can write, even more when you can teach, but certain when you can program.

~Alan Perlis

The best book on programming for the layman is Alice in Wonderland, but that's because it's the best book on anything for the layman.

~Alan Perlis

If a listener nods his head when you're explaining your program, wake

him up.

~Alan Perlis

FORTRAN is not a flower but a weed - it is hardy, occasionally blooms, and grows in every computer.

~Alan Perlis

Any noun can be verbed.

~Alan Perlis

In programming, as in everything else, to be in error is to be reborn.

~Alan Perlis

In English every word can be verbed. Would that it were so in our programming languages.

~Alan Perlis

A good programming language is a conceptual universe for thinking about programming.

~Alan Perlis

A LISP programmer knows the value of everything, but the cost of nothing.

~Alan Perlis

In computing, the mean time to failure keeps getting shorter.

~Alan Perlis

There is no such thing as a free variable.

~Alan Perlis

Optimization hinders evolution. Everything should be built top-down, except the first time. Simplicity does not precede complexity, but follows it.

~Alan Perlis

Often it is the means that justify the ends: goals advance technique and technique survives even when goal structures crumble.

~Alan Perlis

We are on the verge: Today our program proved Fermat's next-to-last theorem.

~Alan Perlis

If you have a procedure with 10 parameters, you probably missed some.

~Alan Perlis

One can't proceed from the informal to the formal by formal means.

~Alan Perlis

Learning French is trivial: the word for horse is cheval, and everything else follows in the same way.

~Alan Perlis

Once you understand how to write a program get someone else to write it.

~Alan Perlis

A picture is worth 10K words - but only those to describe the picture. Hardly any sets of 10K words can be adequately described with pictures.

~Alan Perlis

One can only display complex information in the mind. Like seeing, movement or flow or alteration of view is more important than the static picture, no matter how lovely.

~Alan Perlis

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