

Edsger Dijkstra

Quotes

*Learning, Thinking, People, Challenges, Long, Programming, Simplicity, Giving,
Trying, World, Use, Teaching, Technology, Computer, Bugs, Profound, Hard
Work, Telescopes, Mean, Mistake*

If debugging is the process of removing software bugs, then programming must be the process of putting them in.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The question of whether computers can think is like the question of whether submarines can swim.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Programming is one of the most difficult branches of applied mathematics; the poorer mathematicians had better remain pure mathematicians.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The lurking suspicion that something could be simplified is the world's richest source of rewarding challenges.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Computer science is no more about computers than astronomy is about telescopes.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The purpose of abstraction is not to be vague, but to create a new semantic level in which one can be absolutely precise.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Simplicity and elegance are unpopular because they require hard work and discipline to achieve and education to be appreciated.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Program testing can be used to show the presence of bugs, but never to show their absence!

~Edsger Dijkstra

Teaching COBOL ought to be regarded as a criminal act.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Elegance is not a dispensable luxury but a factor that decides between success and failure.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Simplicity is prerequisite for reliability.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Perfecting oneself is as much unlearning as it is learning.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Too few people recognize that the high technology so celebrated today is essentially a mathematical technology.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Besides a mathematical inclination, an exceptionally good mastery of one's native tongue is the most vital asset of a competent programmer.

~Edsger Dijkstra

About the use of language: it is impossible to sharpen a pencil with a blunt axe. It is equally vain to try to do it with ten blunt axes instead.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Don't compete with me: firstly, I have more experience, and secondly, I have chosen the weapons.

~Edsger Dijkstra

If we wish to count lines of code, we should not regard them as "lines produced" but as "lines spent."

~Edsger Dijkstra

Object-oriented programming is an exceptionally bad idea which could only have originated in California.

~Edsger Dijkstra

We must be very careful when we give advice to younger people; sometimes they follow it!

~Edsger Dijkstra

Beware of "the real world". A speaker's appeal to it is always an invitation not to challenge his tacit assumptions.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Programming in Basic causes brain damage.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Mathematicians are like managers - they want improvement without change.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Are you quite sure that all those bells and whistles, all those wonderful facilities of your so called powerful programming languages, belong to the solution set rather than the problem set?

~Edsger Dijkstra

When building sand castles on the beach, we can ignore the waves but should watch the tide.

~Edsger Dijkstra

If you want more effective programmers, you will discover that they should not waste their time debugging, they should not introduce the bugs to start with.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The use of COBOL cripples the mind; its teaching should, therefore, be regarded as a criminal offense.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Simplicity is a great virtue but it requires hard work to achieve it and education to appreciate it. And to make matters worse: complexity sells better.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Testing shows the presence, not the absence of bugs.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Probably I am very naive, but I also think I prefer to remain so, at least for the time being and perhaps for the rest of my life.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Thanks to the greatly improved possibility of communication, we overrate its importance. Even stronger, we underrate the importance of isolation.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Teaching to unsuspecting youngsters the effective use of formal methods is one of the joys of life because it is so extremely rewarding.

~Edsger Dijkstra

It used to be the program's purpose to instruct our computers; it became the computer's purpose to execute our programs.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The computing scientist's main challenge is not to get confused by the complexities of his own making.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Production speed is severely slowed down if one works with half-time people who have other obligations as well. This is at least a factor of four; probably it is worse.

~Edsger Dijkstra

I don't need to waste my time with a computer just because I am a computer scientist.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The art of programming is the art of organizing complexity.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Much of the excitement we get out of our work is that we don't really know what we are doing.

~Edsger Dijkstra

A programming language is a tool that has profound influence on our thinking habits.

~Edsger Dijkstra

I would therefore like to posit that computing's central challenge, how not to make a mess of it, has not yet been met.

~Edsger Dijkstra

APL is a mistake, carried through to perfection.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Beauty is our business.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Many mathematicians derive part of their self-esteem by feeling themselves the proud heirs of a long tradition of rational thinking; I am afraid they idealize their cultural ancestors.

~Edsger Dijkstra

There should be no such thing as boring mathematics.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Thank goodness we don't have only serious problems, but ridiculous

ones as well.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Aim for brevity while avoiding jargon.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The ability of discerning high quality unavoidably implies the ability of identifying shortcomings.

~Edsger Dijkstra

APL is a mistake, carried through to perfection. It is the language of the future for the programming techniques of the past: it creates a new generation of coding bums.

~Edsger Dijkstra

In the good old days physicists repeated each other's experiments, just to be sure. Today they stick to FORTRAN, so that they can share each other's programs, bugs included.

~Edsger Dijkstra

It is practically impossible to teach good programming to students that have had a prior exposure to BASIC: as potential programmers they are mentally mutilated beyond hope of regeneration.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The effective exploitation of his powers of abstraction must be regarded as one of the most vital activities of a competent programmer.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Industry suffers from the managerial dogma that for the sake of stability and continuity, the company should be independent of the competence of individual employees.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The tools we use have a profound and devious influence on our thinking habits, and therefore on our thinking abilities.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The problems of the real world are primarily those you are left with when you refuse to apply their effective solutions.

~Edsger Dijkstra

There is very little point in trying to urge the world to mend its ways as long as that world is still convinced that its ways are perfectly adequate.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The prisoner falls in love with his chains.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Brainpower is by far our scarcest resource.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Several people have told me that my inability to suffer fools gladly is one of my main weaknesses.

~Edsger Dijkstra

A convincing demonstration of correctness being impossible as long as the mechanism is regarded as a black box, our only hope lies in not regarding the mechanism as a black box.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The use of anthropomorphic terminology forces you linguistically to adopt an operational view. And it makes it practically impossible to argue about programs independently of their being executed.

~Edsger Dijkstra

In their capacity as a tool, computers will be but a ripple on the surface

of our culture. In their capacity as intellectual challenge, they are without precedent in the cultural history of mankind.

~Edsger Dijkstra

PL/1, the fatal disease, belongs more to the problem set than to the solution set.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Progress is possible only if we train ourselves to think about programs without thinking of them as pieces of executable code.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Mentally mutilated potential programmers beyond hope of regeneration.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Computer science has as much to do with computers as astronomy has to do with telescopes.

~Edsger Dijkstra

In the software business there are many enterprises for which it is not clear that science can help them; that science should try is not clear either.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Some consider the puzzles that are created by their omissions as spicy challenges, without which their texts would be boring; others shun clarity lest their work is considered trivial.

~Edsger Dijkstra

If there is one 'scientific' discovery I am proud of, it is the discovery of the habit of writing without publication in mind.

~Edsger Dijkstra

Experience does by no means automatically leads to wisdom and understanding.

~Edsger Dijkstra

The effort of using machines to mimic the human mind has always struck me as rather silly. I would rather use them to mimic something better.

~Edsger Dijkstra

It is not the task of the University to offer what society asks for, but to give what society needs.

~Edsger Dijkstra

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