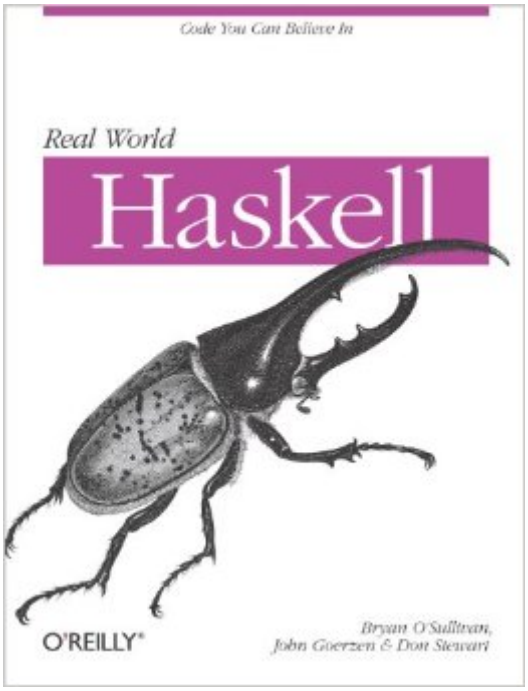
Real World Haskell: Code You Can Believe In



Synopsis

This easy-to-use, fast-moving tutorial introduces you to functional programming with Haskell. You'll learn how to use Haskell in a variety of practical ways, from short scripts to large and demanding applications. Real World Haskell takes you through the basics of functional programming at a brisk pace, and then helps you increase your understanding of Haskell in real-world issues like I/O, performance, dealing with data, concurrency, and more as you move through each chapter.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The good news is, this is probably the best Haskell book yet. The bad news is, it's still a frustratingly confusing jumble. It starts out well, introducing expressions, type inference, recursion, pattern matching, algebraic types, and higher order functions, with an emphasis on maps and folds (the way real world Haskell code is actually written), and it contains exercises that range from simple to challenging. The first four chapters alone are worth the price.Unfortunately, the problems start in chapter 5, and rarely let up. It starts by introducing a datatype for JSON data for the purpose of

pretty-printing it. The way the pretty-printer is rolled out is confusing -- it constantly jumps between code snippets that won't even compile, because a type they depend on is not defined til nearly the end of the chapter. And while it stays away from excessive cleverness, function names are confusingly named. In fact the entire nature of the pretty-printer revolves around a "Doc" abstraction that is never clearly explained or rationalized.Later chapters are also rich with useful information, such as explanations of various GHC language extensions to the type system (which are really de facto standard Haskell nowadays). Unfortunately (there are many "unfortunatelys" to use in this review) I would never have been able to follow these explanations had I not already known a little about them -- unlike the rest of the examples in the book, the examples stop being "real-world" and instead devolve into meaningless metasyntax like "Foo" and "Bar".By the time monads are finally introduced (late, but rightly so -- I consider this delay in introducing them to be a plus), the reader has had to suffer through some very tedious projects, such as parsing an obscure binary format.

This is both a great book, and a horrible book, for learning Haskell. In short, it's well-written, has good structure, and complete examples that enable you to follow along, but it's getting too old.I feel I learned a lot from it, but it took a great deal of effort. Apart from breaks here and there, I started a year ago, and decided to devote one hour every morning to it. I also decide to rigorously type in everything in the book, in order to learn by doing.What's good:The book introduces Haskell without assuming that you know anything about the language. It tells you how to get started, even how you install Haskell on various operating systems, including Windows, Mac OS, and multiple variations of Linux.Whenever there's a code listing, it starts with the name of the file, so if you're typing along, not only does it tell you what to type, but also in which file you should put the code. I found that tremendously helpful.In the first many chapters, the code is introduced in order, which means that it compiles right away. In later chapters, when you see some more 'real-world' examples, the code doesn't compile right away, because it calls functions not yet defined. Sometimes I found myself typing for days before I could get everything to compile, and then I had to go back in order to try to understand what I just spent some hours typing.The entire text of the book is legally available for free online at [...], so I could have simply cut and pasted from the site. Still, I chose to type, because I believe that the act of typing helps me retain what I've learned.The online version of the book includes community contributions in the form of comments, and I found those indispensable.

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