Java in a Nutshell: A Desktop Quick Reference by David Flanagan

Utterly Invaluable Reference Though Not For Beginners

The release of Java 1.1 brings many new features to the Java language. Java in a Nutshell, 2nd Edition, a worthy successor to the authors bestselling first edition of the book, offers an excellent way to keep up with most of them. You'll find that the second edition carries over many strong points from the original, including a quick-start introduction to Java for C or C++ programmers and the handy quick-reference format. It also details the many new features of Java 1.1, including extensions to the object model and the new release of the Abstract Windowing Toolkit (AWT), Inner Classes, Java Beans, and Java ARchive (JAR) files. The book does not attempt to cover enterprise application programming interfaces (API), such as Java's new commerce-related security features, Java Database Connectivity (JDBC) and Remote Method Invocation (RMI). The author plans to document these features in a separate volume. The second half of Java in a Nutshell, 2nd Edition, is a quick reference to all the packages that comprise the Java API. In the course of over 300 pages, the author introduces each package with a summary and a graphical hierarchy diagram. He then documents each package's component classes and interfaces in detail. For cases where you know the name of a class, but not its package, an index of classes, methods, and fields provide a useful cross-reference to the packages that contain them. This edition removes some of the example code of the previous edition, but provides many samples that cover new language features.

My Personal Review:
The first quarter of the book is a very good introduction to Java, the syntax, as well as object oriented programming (OOP). The syntax and OOP portions of the book are the best I've seen in any book. If you are new to Java, reading through these sections carefully will teach you almost everything you'll need to know about the Java language. The third edition of the book doesn't assume a C/C++ background, so even those with limited or no programming experience will find this section very helpful.
Next you'll find excellent coverage of the Java platform. The bulk of the book is a reference of the different Java classes in JDK 1.0, 1.1, 1.2, and even 1.3Beta. The coverage is excellent. I would have liked to see examples, but I suppose that really is asking too much from one book. I have a large library of Java books, but this one is 1 for me. Shelf time for this book is going to be very low. The book literally hasn't seen a shelf since it arrived from Amazon.

There are several Java books I find to be far superior to others. For anyone new to the Java language, I believe the following are the very best books to have nearby (ranked in order): Java in a Nutshell, 3rd... Java Examples in a Nutshell... Java Foundation Classes in a Nutshell... Java Enterprise in a Nutshell... The Java Class Libraries, 2nd, Vol 1. by Patrick Chan

Obviously, I'm a fan of David Flanagan's Java books (he wrote the top four). Pick one up to see why. They are all excellent, but my favorite is this one (JavaNut 3rd edition). The set of four Flanagan books easily comprise the best resource on Java available.

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