

Flash Expert Kick Start

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This is usually the process I follow to learn a new technology/programming language quickly, effectively, and above all, proficiently.

Research your playing field

This is usually the largest cause of failure. When you really think about it, the word “expert” refers to an individual that has an incredible deal of knowledge about a particular field or activity. The subtle point to note in this definition is that an expert is really defined by his related field or activity. The bottom line is that you absolutely *must* know the field first. Then if you get the time, try to work yourself into its limelight.

The best place to learn about Flash in its current developmental stage is the Internet - specifically, through blogs. I provide a list of bloggers that are unquestionably the world's best flash developers, and constantly push the limits of this technology. The list is far from exhaustive, but each of these bloggers link to others, and represent a wide spectrum of Flash topics.

Read

This one's a given. Read online reviews of books and pick good ones. Be afraid of the ones with pretty covers because those are usually making up in eye-candy what they fail to provide in content.

Amazon is a great place – learn to love it. Here's a horrible insider's trick on buying books – call Barnes & Noble, and order it in. Once they have it in, they'll call you. Drive over to the store. Now you have two options:

1. Read the book right there. Buy coffee from their café to satiate your conscience.
2. Buy it, and return it within a month (my preferred choice – I'm a fast reader, so I'm usually back in a week). There is no salvation for this act. You are going to hell. The way I see it, I'll know more than the others around me in there. Knowledge is power (I don't know if that applies in Hell, but I'm in denial, so it's ok).

Practice

Theory is worthless without implementation. If you get an hour in the day, it's enough time to put some of your newfound knowledge to test. Make a habit of this. All those hours add up, and what's more – you will have a lot of interesting studies to put up on your web site, and include in your portfolio.

Repeat

Welcome to world of the new age technologist! This last step is the most crucial one. The times are changing, and believe me; the technologies are changing with them. There's a world of difference between Flash 5 and Flash MX2004, versions that are only 4 years apart in their releases.

This step should be effortless. If you find that it takes a lot of effort, you should start looking for a new career. This is one aspect of any computer-related career that is never going to change. Your skills today are going to be worthless tomorrow. So my advice is – learn how to learn, not what to learn. Did that make any sense?

Appendix A

Blogs

This list serves as a good starting point.

Grant Skinner

<http://www.gskinner.com/blog/>

Branden Hall

<http://www.waxpraxis.org/>

Nigel Pegg

<http://www.markme.com/nigel/>

Colin Mook (also the author of what I consider to be the best book in the market)

<http://www.mook.org/blog/>

Guy Watson

<http://www.flashguru.co.uk/>

Chafic Kazoun

<http://www.rewindlife.com/>

Quasimondo (he has great resources – check his links)

<http://www.quasimondo.com/>

Appendix B

Communities

FlashKit

<http://www.flashkit.com/index.shtml>

Ultrashock

<http://www.ultrashock.com/>

Actionscripts.org

<http://www.actionscripts.org/>

We're Here

<http://www.were-here.com/homepage/default.asp>

FlashMXFiles

<http://www.flashmxfiles.com/>

Flash-DB

<http://www.flash-db.com/>