

Position Statement

I believe that the first-year programming language course should be taught more along the lines of first-year foreign language courses. You don't start the first course in a foreign language by giving the conjugations of lots of verbs. You start by presenting a realistic conversational situation and study the meaning of the complete sentences used in that situation. Analogously, you shouldn't start the first programming language course by giving lots of data types and lots of statement types for that particular programming language, illustrated with trivial pieces of coding. You should start by discussing realistic software, and you should introduce just the language features you need for that software, as the need arises.

Eventually, you will cover the essential features of the programming language, and you can present any additional features in an appendix. But the emphasis should be on the use of a programming language for the development of software. The programming language is a means to an end, not the end itself.

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