

# Why college instructors like Murach books

## Their students learn more and enjoy their courses more

We frequently get emails like this from instructors:

*“My students are learning more than they did with the previous book.”*

*“Several students have asked that we use Murach books for all our courses.”*

*“My students and I just ‘love’ your books.”*

If you read through [Why students learn more with Murach books](#), you'll discover some of the underlying reasons for reactions like these. But briefly, our books present the material in a way that gets students doing productive work right away, lets them cover more ground in a term, and gives them confidence that they know what they're doing. So if it's true that the greatest joy of education is the joy of greater understanding, that means that they also enjoy the course more.

## Our modular organization lets instructors customize their courses

In the first section or two of all our books, we present the core content for the subject, which includes a complete subset of usable skills. After the core content, each section of the book is designed as an independent module. This means that these sections don't have to be taught in sequence. As a result, you can customize your courses by assigning just those sections that you want to teach.

Whenever possible, each of the chapters is also designed as an independent module. When this is true, you can further customize your courses by assigning just those chapters that you want to teach.

## Our top-down chapter design puts the essentials first

Unlike many competing books and products, most chapters in our books have a unique top-down design that moves from the simple to the complex. This makes it easier for the students to learn. It also means that you can present the topics at the start of a chapter to make sure everyone understands the essentials, without presenting all of the topics in the chapter.

## Our introductory books work well for both low-aptitude and high-aptitude students

One of the problems that most instructors experience when teaching a programming class is that some students clearly learn faster than others. And some students probably shouldn't be taking the class at all. When you use one of the lockstep college textbooks that requires everyone to move at the same pace, this frequently means that you have to slow down the high-aptitude students while you wait for the low-aptitude students to catch up.

With our books, though, you have some new ways to deal with these differences. For instance, because our books are both modular and self-instructional, you can let the high-aptitude students work independently on the chapters that you assign. You can also assign more difficult projects to these students. Then, while the high-aptitude students work on their own, you have more time to work with the low-aptitude students.

Our exercises also let you deal with these differences in aptitude. For instance, the exercises for the early chapters in our books carefully step the low-aptitude students through the development of the book applications. This helps the low-aptitude students get started while the high-aptitude students breeze through these exercises.

Similarly, some of the exercises in the later chapters are designed so the low-aptitude students can do them, even if these students have trouble doing the student projects. This means that these students can achieve some measure of success and understanding, even if they shouldn't be encouraged to take future programming courses.

### **Our introductory books clearly identify low-aptitude students**

Today, many programming textbooks are so “dumbed down” that even low-aptitude students pass the courses. The basic approach in each chapter of those books is to (1) present some new skills, (2) present a simple application that requires those skills, (3) step the readers through the development of that application, and (4) ask the students to develop another application that is parallel in structure to the one they just walked through.

The main problem with this approach is that low-aptitude students are never forced to realize that they don't have programming aptitude. In some cases, these students even enroll in advanced courses.

The other problem with this tedious approach is that it bores the high-aptitude students. In fact, one common outcome of introductory courses in all departments is that students who thought they might want to major in that field decide that they don't want to major in it after all.

In contrast, we believe every introductory programming course should help students determine whether they have the aptitude for work in that field. That's why our introductory books challenge the students to develop complete applications on their own by the fourth or fifth chapter. We've done this in all of our books for more than 30 years, and we have long since learned that this is the equivalent of an aptitude test. In short, if students can do our exercises and projects, they have the ability to become professional programmers. And if they can't, they'll realize they should be looking at other career options.

### **Our books are carefully coordinated for a series of courses**

In contrast to other books, ours are designed and developed by a small group of staff writers and editors. As a result, we can and do coordinate the structure and contents of our books so they work together for a series of courses.

This means that you won't get unnecessary duplication in two or more of our books. This also means that you can be sure that one of our beginning books really does provide all of the prerequisites for one of our advanced books...because we designed them that way.

For instance, our two Java books can be used to teach programmers how to develop web applications with Java servlets and JSP. Combinations of our .NET books can be used to teach programmers how to develop either Windows or web applications with C# or Visual Basic. And our COBOL, CICS, DB2, and JCL books are commonly used for a series of courses that teach programmers how to develop mainframe applications.

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