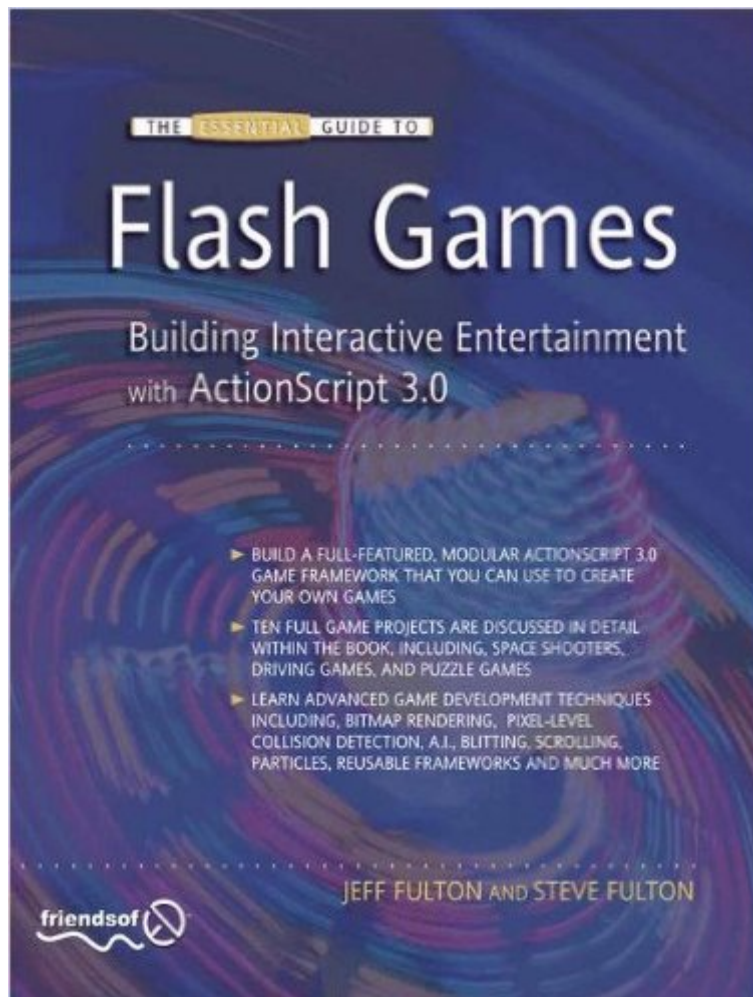# The Essential Guide To Flash Games: Building Interactive Entertainment With ActionScript

Synopsis

The Essential Guide to Flash Games is a unique tool for Flash game developers. Rather than focusing on a bunch of low-level how-to material, this book dives straight into building games. The book is divided into specific game genre projects, covering everything from old classics such as a Missile Command-style game, to hot new genres such as retro evolved. The chapters build in complexity through the book, and new tools are introduced along the way that can be reused for other games. The game projects covered start simple and increase in complexity as more and more tools are added to your tool chest. Ten full game projects are discussed in detail. Each solves a very different game development problem and builds on the knowledge gained from the previous project. Many advanced game development techniques are covered, including particle systems, advanced controls, artificial intelligence, blitting, scrolling, and more.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book has some excellent educational content. If you can get past a staggering amount of typographical errors (some of them in source code!), it is a fantastic resource. If you are familiar with programming and want to learn how to program Flash and Flex games, I highly recommend these authors.Their editor, however, needs to be shot. There are words missing from sentences every few pages, typos in the source code, and function names that change each time they are referenced. There's even a paragraph (on page 125) explaining a snippet of source code from the previous section... but the previous section of code has been totally rewritten, so the paragraph is worse than

meaningless, it's totally confusing. There is an Errata section on the authors' website, but it doesn't even begin to cover the errors in this book. It is painfully apparent that the code in the book was typed in as text and then tested and debugged later, as many examples are inconsistent or have obvious syntax errors.If you are just starting out with programming I do NOT recommend this book UNLESS you download the accompanying source code. Otherwise you will spend too much time wondering why your program doesn't work when it's an error in the book itself.I hate to give this a crappy review. I am learning a lot from this book and I *WANT* this book to be as great as its subject matter could be. If the authors release a Second Edition or even a corrected version, I'll be first in line to pick it up.All that said, I still recommend this book. Their design principles are sound, and the code examples from their website actually work without any fussing or debugging. (There are some mispelled class names, but they are consistent, so the code DOES work.) If you are an experienced programmer who can spot typos in source code, and are patient with a debugger, the book will teach you exactly what you need to know to get your game off the ground.

On the positive: I am learning a lot from this book. The authors have an excellent approach to presenting the material, and at least for me, I feel the broad brush concepts they present, especially in organizing game code are very good. What is absolutely mind boggling is the number of typos in the constantly referenced source code. You are supposed to be building your code on previous exercises (good idea), however there are often changes to function and variable names, forcing you to debug code that is presented to you as an example. Perhaps it wouldn't be as glaring if they hadn't preceded every source sample in the book with the phrase 'we have highlighted the code that is different from that game.', when as it turns out there are often dozens of other subtle changes you'll need to catch yourself.Inconsistent, or inaccurate information presented in source code presented as educational reference is a complete fail.

It's nice to read a book by someone who knows what they are talking about. The Essential Guide to Flash Games by Jeff and Steve Fulton is a complete overview of 2D game programming. These guys obviously have some real-world experience with game programming, and their book reflects that. From the very beginning it teaches stuff that a game programmer actually needs to know. Chapter one builds a simple pop-the-balloon game that demonstrates how to get an application window, display some graphics, run a timing loop, get and respond to user input, play sounds, and keep score. That's all in chapter one. The next couple chapters finish a simple game engine by adding game states - intro screen, gameplay screen, game over screen, etc. By the end of chapter

five you have made a simple Space Invaders style game. By the end of chapter seven, you have a fully functional tank combat game that is actually fun to play! The rest of the book covers tile-mapping, optimizing bitmap graphics in Flash, optimizing frame rates, and getting the 2.5D look. Check out the source code from the Apress website to see what I mean. The text is well written and authoritative. All of the basics of game programming are presented in a mature and thoughtful manner. The ideas presented are not limited to Flash programming, making this a good introduction to game programming in general.

First, I am only half way through this book (page 242) and so far I think this is the best flash game book out there because it covers both Flash and Flex. If you are new to Actionscript, they tell you very early on to get the Flash ActionScript 3.0 book for Flash and Flex (page 6). Basically, you need to be comfortable coding to go through this book. Second, you pretty much HAVE to get the source code. This is true no matter what for ANY code based book. If you don't you are doing yourself a disservice.The best thing about this book is the source code. Go to the book's page on the publisher's site and download the code. You will refer to this over and over again. There are both code corrections, and versions for of the code for both the Flash and Flex code and yes, there are differences. they even have a specific download which helps you get started with Flex (Chapter 1 code). The way I have been going through this book is to read the chapter, type in the code and then make any corrections you need to make. Usually, I start with the book text and then open the source code for the Flex specific implementation. Also, they talk about FlashDevelop though they don't have a specific version for it.One thing I did not expect was the tools that they tell you about which are critical for automating tasks like creating a levels or music and sound effect.The only bad thing is that as you go on in the book, they split the code up into chunks with descriptions in between. Because the code (often for the same class) is fragmented, it can become difficult to follow. Again, with access to the source code, it is pretty easy to follow and review.

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