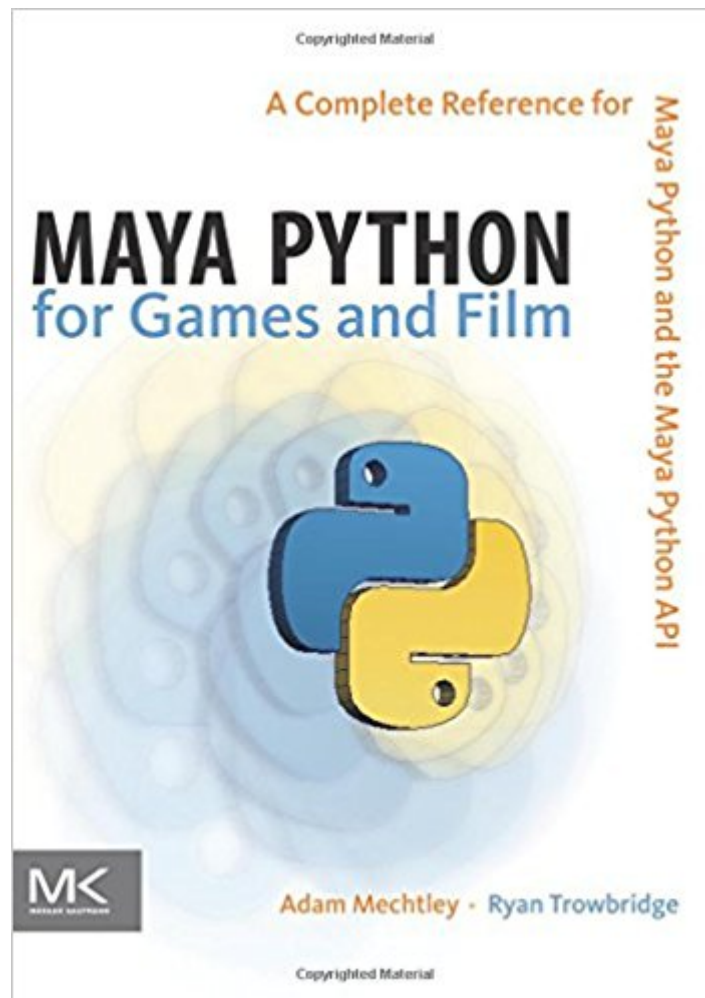




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Maya Python For Games And Film: A Complete Reference For Maya Python And The Maya Python API



Synopsis

Maya Python for Games and Film is the first book to focus exclusively on how to implement Python with Maya. Written by trusted authorities in the field, this in-depth guide will help you master Maya Python, whether you're a seasoned technical artist looking to make the transition from MEL to Python or an aspiring artist not wanting to scramble for information.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book was my first contact with Maya scripting, as well as with Python, however I had some web programming experience (jQuery and PHP) prior to learning Python, so that made my learning process a bit easier. Therefore please bare this in mind when reading my review, as your experience with this book might differ if you've never programmed before. The 375 pages of content are structured into 3 parts and I'll analyze each part below. PART 1 - BASICS OF PYTHON AND MAYA (175 pages) Even if you were a complete newbie to programming, this book has you covered, as it spends a good amount of time explaining all the basics of Python (variables, functions, sequence types, iteration, error trapping, classes etc.). The nice thing is that all examples are within the Maya context, so you can immediately understand where, when and why to use certain programming language features. This is of TREMENDOUS help to beginners, because many times programming concepts can become quite abstract if not demonstrated in a practical, application-oriented way. By the end of this part you'll know enough Python to tackle just about any scripting task in Maya. My only critique is that there could've been more of the practical examples

using the Maya commands module. A few common commands are covered (select, ls, xform, get/set/add/connectAttr and a few of others), but some extra examples would've been great. Don't get this wrong: learning how just a few commands work means you'll know how to read any command documentation, so it's only a problem if you're lazy, but I think a few more (short) examples would've been welcome.

PART 2 - DESIGNING MAYA TOOLS WITH PYTHON (80 pages)

This part mainly deals with the Maya GUI and Qt. Basically you'll learn how to create graphical interfaces for your scripts using the commands module and Qt Designer. It's not as in-depth and some other resources on the Qt side, but it get you an idea of what it's all about. You'll probably want to look for dedicated Qt training afterwards, but this is not a scripting priority anyway, as a lot of GUI functionality can be achieved with just using the commands module.

PART 3 - MAYA PYTHON API FUNDAMENTALS (114 pages)

The Maya API is a subject for which not many organized resources are available. And when they are available, it can be difficult to follow them without getting stuck or otherwise confused, especially if you're a Python programmer. The official Maya API documentation is the prime example of this: a lot of information and complex examples, but mostly written in C++ and hard to understand for a beginner. Luckily, this part of the book explains most of the underlying concepts of the Maya API, details the way Maya works with data and, very important, demystifies the official documentation from Autodesk, so you can read through it and understand what is what. Two types of plug-ins are programmed and analyzed step-by-step: a command plug-in (MPxCommand) and a DG Node plug-in (MPxNode). Both are given the same attention and all their standard aspects are discussed. As in Part 1, though the existing information is neatly provided, I feel a few more short practical examples would've benefited beginners. Also, including an analysis of a few more commonly-used node types (like a deformer node) would've been great. But all in all, it's a great start point.

Conclusion:

It's a very good starting point for anyone looking to use Python inside Maya. The underlying concepts of Maya are very well described and you'll get a good understanding of how things work behind the curtains. At 374 pages, the book is fairly short, but packs a surprising amount of information. It could have used a few more examples demonstrating various other commands and node types, but overall it has a lot of the knowledge you need to start coding your own tools. However, as will all written materials, there is a fair possibility of this book falling just short of being "all you need" to start coding, so you'll probably have to consult a few other sources (preferably videos) before going full-sail into more complex coding. But all said and done, for starters it's about as good as it gets.

FINAL RATING 4.5/5

Tips:

Upon completing this book, I recommend watching some video tutorials, to both compare your newly acquired knowledge to a different source and to see how it all works in a live environment

(clear as written info might be, it's nowhere near as clear as a live demonstration). Chayan Vinayak has a good 'Maya Python API' course available on cgcircuit.com (I watched it and it was of help clearing a few concepts and dealing with some things not covered in this book - like the deformer node, for example). Chad Vernon also has a Maya API introductory course, as well as a dedicated custom deformer node tutorial, however they are in C++, but you can nevertheless watch them after getting the hang of Python, as the syntax is not that different and translating from one language to the other shouldn't prove too difficult. Of course, googling for maya api courses can also lead you to some other places, but just don't expect that many options to choose from.

This is a great, comprehensive book on using Python with Maya. There is a nice progression to the presented information. The book starts with establishing the differences and similarities between MEL and Python and why you'd use one over the other (or how to use them together) and builds steadily from there - from the simple to the sophisticated and powerful. The authors do a commendable job of explaining the mechanics of Python and demonstrate how to get the most from its implementation inside Maya. My only criticism is in the font used for the code in the book. The code font is often hard to read, for whatever reason, and I would have gone with something that was a bit more legible. It's certainly not a deal-breaker, and maybe it will change in future versions. Or maybe it is easier to read on the Kindle version (I am reviewing the hardback). Overall, though, can't recommend this book enough.

This book isn't an introduction to Python first off, so it would help if you have experience with the language. I myself have used Python only a bit and this goes for any programming language actually. My current role is as an artist and not a technical director. So if I can follow this book most people should be fine. I'm still working through the book but right now the content covered has been solid. Keep in mind that this is a broad overview. While readers will focus on building bits of code here and there to do something in Maya you won't walk away from this book with a completed auto rigging system. It's an introduction to using Python with Mayas API. It shows you the ins and outs but it's up to you to stitch these concepts together to create the tools you want. (KINDLE CRIT) As for the print version I'm not sure this is an issue but with the Kindle version the example code formatting can be confusing. White spaces / indents are important in Python and as code examples become more complex indents for if, while loops, functions, etc tend to be ignored. I would imagine it's hard to get this perfect in a kindle text since font size can be changed and formatting will change with device screen / window sizes. But a heads up, pay close attention to () and ; characters as

these will help you format your code properly. More so when a code example spans across pages. If you have scripting experience this might be less of an issue & as you gain it through this book it becomes easier to sort out. In the end even the book is solid. Formatting aside of some of the examples this is a great text to have if you're working into TD work with Python inside Maya. Start here with this book but don't stop there. Personally I'll be following this book up with a 3D Buzz tutorial dvd about "Developing Modular Rigging Systems with Python", Digital tutors has solid scripting resources for Maya also. There are also plenty of free tutorials online by Maya TD's on their personal sites & tons more on youtube! One last thing. Mayas script editor is cumbersome to use at best & having a solid IDE to work with makes learning scripting much easier. There are ways to hookup Wing Python IDE and others to Mayas python module allowing you to script inside them. Another option is the Charcoal Editor by Chris Zurbrigg. It replaces the default editor inside Maya allowing you to quickly test inside Maya. While not as feature rich as Wing IDE it beats the default script editor Maya with ease. I've tried both routes and setting up Charcoal is the easier of the 2 for a novice, but setting up the external editor isn't impossible either. There are tutorials for Wing IDE & others on the how to. So. Good introductory book. Follow it up! And find yourself a good python IDE to replace the default Maya editor.

This book is still very useful for learning the basics of python in Maya 2016. Following along in a chapter saved me a lot of googling and the scripts it helps you write can be deconstructed and modified to whatever you need once you get far enough in to begin customizing. Has been a great reference to have on my desk.

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