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VISUAL BASIC NET REFERENCES
by Howard Callif

This article will provide useful references for learning and using Visual Basic NET. If you are interested in learning more, or want more articles on this subject, please let me know.

The VB Net 2005 development platform is much more difficult to pick up and start using than Quickbasic or VB6, so there may not be a large number of actuaries using the language. The 2008 development environment is significantly better, but unfortunately still has a much larger learning curve than BASIC from years past. Even so, I consider NET to be a premier business user tool. It is powerful and packed with functionality, and worth some extra setup time. The development environment is a platform for a large number of NET languages, so I think this will grow in popularity, and usefulness, since more languages will be added. Note that Visual Studio 2010 will be released in March, but I have not previewed release. Here are some useful reference books and sites, with summaries included. Since the new release is coming so soon, there may be updated versions of these books as well.

Programming Microsoft Visual Basic 2005: The Language, by Francesco Balena–Microsoft Press, 2006
This is THE book to buy on Visual Basic NET (in my opinion). It has extensive examples, covers a large spectrum of the language, and is an incredibly useful reference book. It is almost 1000 pages, but mine came with a CD that had an electronic copy. I wasn't able to verify whether the version on sale now still includes it.

Section Specialist

Sam Phillips, Staff Editor

Visual Basic 2005 in a Nutshell by Tim Patrick, Steven Roman, Ron Petrusha, and Paul Lomax–O'Reilly
There is an entire "In a Nutshell" series, and this is an excellent reference book series. There is a version for VB6 and VBA (Excel macros), and other languages. It includes a language summary, sample code, and identifies common errors and unexpected behaviors. This book will help you get up and running quickly for any language.

Practical Guidelines and Best Practices for Microsoft Visual Basic .NET and Visual C# Developers, by Francesco Balena and Giuseppe Dimauro–2005, Microsoft Press
This book helps explain not only what best practices are, but why. There are often times when a conflict arises, and implementing a "best practice" causes additional work, or other issues. There are also many practices that are simply a matter of preference, but one standard must be chosen for consistency across a team. This book identifies options and tradeoffs, and presents the pro's and con's for each.

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