

Webucator Training Services
At-Your-Own-Pace Java 2 5.0 Programming Course
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Course Information: <http://www.webucator.com/AtYourOwnPace/>

Price: \$99.95

Webucator is an online provider of technology and business training classes with a variety of services including real-time classes, customized training, and at-your-own-pace courses.

I reviewed an at-your-own-pace course and chose the Java 2 5.0 Programming Course from a wide selection that included Java, Microsoft, database, Adobe, web design and development, and Linux courses. Webucator at-your-own-pace courses require the use of Internet Explorer being run on a PC so I used a custom built desktop with a 1.81GHz AMD processor with 2GB of memory running Windows XP Home and using Internet Explorer 7. The only other requirements for the course I took were having a copy of Java 2 5.0. No IDE is necessary as all course exercises could be authored using a text editor and run from the command line.

Registering for the course was simple with login information being provided by Webucator after account creation and validation. Login was quick and once inside I was presented with direct links to my course package and each individual course within the package. There are also a number of other resources available including online help, technical support, and account management. A side note: after three months of reviewing this course I have yet to need even the online help functionality even though I viewed it briefly the first time I logged in.

I found navigating through the course to be intuitive with clearly labeled buttons and help tabs. Each course started with a brief description of what was to be covered and an option to take a skills assessment test prior to beginning. Having programmed in C++, I used the assessment tests to find out what I needed to focus on in each section; material that was not considered mastered was marked for review with direct links to the content provided. Using the assessment tests it was also possible to skip entire parts of the course package if you are not a complete beginner and know something of the subject already.

Course topics also had a natural progression from basic to advanced; starting off with fundamentals and basic data types, it was possible to move quickly through control structure (loops, if/else, etc), classes, more advanced data types (queues, stacks, etc), and then into inheritance, exception handling, and even basic multi-threaded programming.

Each course in the package was split into lessons with each lesson including an introduction to the material, the material itself, test questions, and “try-it-yourself” program exercises. If a subject was a bit complex there might be a step-by-step walkthrough as well, combining all the material covered by that lesson into a simple to understand, functioning program. Test questions could be multiple choice, true/false, write-in, or matching and you knew right away whether your answer was correct with an explanation of each answer after submission. For the most part questions were easy to understand, there were a couple in which the wording made it difficult to discern exactly what they were asking but of course, if I got the answer wrong I found out very quickly how to correct it the next time around.

Keeping track of your progress through courses could be handled in a number of different ways included direct feedback at the end of each course, a transcript of courses you have worked on so far, a number of reports, and a list of recently accessed courses which was displayed each time you logged in. I found the transcript to be the best way of tracking my progress because it not only included the grades for each course but also actual time spent on each course, dates each course was started/completed, and if you had to take a test more than once there was also a grade comparison between them.

Overall I was very satisfied with the knowledge I acquired by taking this course. Being new to the industry and currently enrolled in college courses I find myself reading a large number of technical books covering everything from individual languages to programming concepts and algorithms. At times this reading can become tedious so an interactive break served as good jump-start for the brain. Time is also an issue when school, work, and family are mixed: with the one-year of access I have to the course I will no doubt come back and review material as I plan on taking further courses in the future.