

# INTRODUCTION



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I have written this book specifically for beginners. I make no apologies to those who are already proficient in WAP to some degree, or who are already programming in another scripting language. After more than 30 years working with and around computers, I know that there is always something else to know or find out, even in those subjects that I think I know well.

So I have tried hard to make this book understandable to anybody who wants to write real WML sites for WAP devices, or for anybody who just wants to know what “this WAP thing” is all about.

I have also found that being interested in different fields can provide unlooked for solutions to problems that come up every day. Who would have thought that knowing WML for devices with small screens would make me reexamine the way I write HTML for Internet web sites every day? Who would have thought ten years ago that knowing how to code in C would make picking up WMLScript so easy? Or that getting a basic understanding of XML and how it works would make WML such a breeze to work with?

All of the things that we do and experience can have a direct impact on everything else that we do in life. (If you want to learn how to be more patient with others, go and write a word processor in COBOL. If you want a *truly* mind altering experience, try writing and working with an application that uses dynamic multi-dimensional arrays.)

If I have done my job well, you will be able to create some good applications while reading this book and some great applications by the end of the book. If I have done my job very well, then you will be able to apply some of the data in this book to other related fields and make those areas better than they were already. The section on how to make an application more usable to the end user, for example, applies to any application on any machine where you are having to deal with user interaction, whether it is a mobile device or not.

Above all, you should always bear in mind that WAP, and in particular WML and WMLScript, are just tools that can be harnessed to make your imagination a reality. I have tried to paint some pictures of what is possible, and to show you the rudiments of how it can be accomplished.

I have tried to make the learning curve as painless as possible. I know what it is like to get thrown in at the deep end of the pool, and struggling to make sense of anything at all. I also know what it's like to be treated like a little kid, ("This big box here is called a computer. That's a big word, isn't it?"), and so I have tried to avoid being patronizing. You are obviously literate, intelligent, and interested; otherwise you wouldn't even be reading this introduction in the first place. I promise to treat you as such throughout the rest of this book.

Here's to your "killer app"!

Dale Bulbrook