



Advanced Visual Basic

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C Through Objects
John Connely

***This book is dedicated to
the many excellent students
at Miami-Dade Community College
who have helped me learn to teach
Visual Basic***

Preface

At any time, I enjoy bringing out a new programming book. But it's especially pleasant to write about Microsoft Visual Basic®. Visual Basic 3 and Visual Basic 4 made a huge impact on the programming world and set the standard for visual interface programming. Now, with the transition to Visual Basic 5, programmers are more excited than ever to be creating ActiveX controls and programming on the Internet. Microsoft-certified Visual Basic consultants can almost name their own price if they have experience with the latest tools and techniques.

Why This Book Was Written

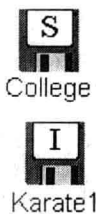
During the last few years, colleges everywhere have found Visual Basic to be a popular and useful vehicle for teaching Windows Programming applications and concepts. At Miami-Dade, we began teaching the course in late 1995. Soon afterward, we realized that Visual Basic should be taught at the intermediate and advanced levels, to people who take programming *very* seriously. We immediately found professional programmers and would-be programmers filling the second-semester Visual Basic classes. For two years I have been creating and refining stacks of course handouts and sample programs for this course, and getting great help from students. To say that students have *taught me to program* in Visual Basic is an understatement, because so many of them have shared their considerable knowledge and skills.

Features of This Book

Every experienced instructor knows that students have a variety of learning styles. Some learn from manuals; others from sample programs; some prefer the "human" touch, being able to spend one-on-one time with an instructor; some learn from step-by-step exercises. To help address different learning styles, this book contains a number of pedagogical features that serve to reinforce each other during the learning process:

- **Object-oriented programming.** During the survey and reviewing process for this book, we found that many instructors wanted object-oriented programming to be emphasized much more strongly than in existing Visual Basic textbooks. I completely agree! Therefore, objects are used throughout the book, with special emphasis on class design in Chapter 4, integration with databases in Chapter 6, OLE objects in Chapter 9, and designing ActiveX components in Chapter 11.
- **Discussions about program design, coding style, object-oriented concepts.** These concepts are at the core of a solid computer science education.
- **A short table of contents** is displayed at the beginning of each chapter. People like to see what the chapter is about, at a glance.

- **Pop-up programming tips** that show up in gray-shaded boxes. The reader can ignore these without disturbing the flow of the main text body, and come back to them later. It's surprising how often these little tips become useful when programs won't work!
- **Reference information** on Visual Basic, the Jet Database Engine, Crystal Reports, the Windows API, ActiveX components, and online help. The Microsoft manuals and online help are wonderful, but it's not easy to limit the scope of information. In this book, you find lots of tables and lists, just when you need to use them in a program.
- **Hands-on programming examples** that guide the reader while working at the computer. These are short and simple, designed to demonstrate concepts, and it's always nice to have something to do at the computer.
- **One or two moderately complex applications** that are specified, designed, and implemented in each chapter. The source code for these programs is on the student disk. Anyone who has written real-world applications can appreciate the importance of careful design and planning. Students, lacking that experience, should not be misled into thinking that all Visual Basic programs are trivial in size and complexity.
- **Review questions** at the end of each chapter. Some are no-brainers, some require thought. But you can trace the origin of every question back to a specific spot in the reading, in case you didn't read the chapter carefully enough the first time (who does?). Answers to the odd-numbered questions are in Appendix C. Answers to the even-numbered questions are printed in the Instructor Manual.
- **End-of-Chapter programming exercises** that offer a variety of programming challenges, from easy to difficult. The solutions to these programs are printed in the instructor's manual and are placed on the disk that accompanies the instructor's manual. In the writing of these programs, we gain valuable experience in problem solving. The programs can be fun, frustrating, exhilarating, aggravating, inspiring, and many other things. But they *do* teach you to program.
- **A Visual Basic review tutorial** for programmers who are experienced in other languages is available in Appendix A. This doesn't replace a beginning course in programming by any means, but it can be great for people who already know what they want to do, and just need the tools to do it.
- A **competency exam** located in Appendix A to help professors and students move more rapidly into Visual Basic. Students can judge their own mastery of fundamental topics, on their own time. Each question in the test is keyed to a particular topic in the Visual Basic review tutorial (Appendix A).
- **Tutorials for VB add-ins**, Data Manager and VisData. These are handy utilities for students who do not have Microsoft Access available. The tutorials are in Appendix B.
- **Programs supplied on disk** are indicated by a small computer disk icon in the margin. A disk with the letter S inside refers to a program on the student diskette that accompanies this book. A diskette with the letter I inside refers to a program on the instructor disk that accompanies the instructor manual. The name of the directory holding the program is always shown below the disk. For example, the following icons indicate a program in the \College directory on the student disk, and a program in the \Karate1 directory on the instructor disk.



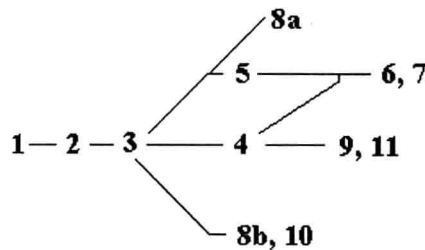
A Quick Survey of Chapter Topics...

Chapters 1-10 are compatible with Visual Basic 4.0. All chapters are compatible with Visual Basic 5.0:

- Chapter 1, **Designing and Coding Programs**, explains the application development cycle, user interface design, coding guidelines, error handling, and performance optimization.
- Chapter 2, **Building an Invoice Application**, develops a point-of-sale application in several stages, introduces the common dialog control, and shows how to save and restore system registry settings.
- Chapter 3, **Arrays and Collections**, introduces objects, collections, random files, MDI applications, and an event-driven computer game that is always popular with students.
- Chapter 4, **Object-Oriented Programming**, goes head-on into object-oriented programming, with classes, objects, methods, properties, collection classes, and a complete application for scheduling doctors office appointments.
- Chapter 5, **Introducing Databases**, shows how to create a database, use the data, data-bound grid, list, and combo controls, and shows how to use Seek and FindFirst to search for records.
- Chapter 6, **Data Access Objects**, concentrates on data access objects and multi-user databases, and develops two database applications in stages.
- Chapter 7, **Relational Databases**, shows how to design multi-table databases, create SQL queries and data definition statements, create validation rules, and goes through the steps of coding a multi-table database application.
- Chapter 8, **Reports and Online Help**, shows how to use Crystal Reports to create professional-looking reports, and how to create online help files for users of an application.
- Chapter 9, **Object Linking and Embedding**, introduces object linking and embedding (OLE), showing how to integrate Visual Basic with Microsoft Word and Excel, using OLE containers and objects.
- Chapter 10, **Tapping into the Windows API**, focuses on calling DLL procedures and taking advantage of the Windows *application programmer's interface* (API).

- Chapter 11, **Creating ActiveX Components**, shows how to create ActiveX components using Visual Basic 5, with examples of ActiveX controls, a DLL, and an out-of-process component server.
- Appendix A: **Visual Basic Review**, is a quick-start tutorial on the essentials of Visual Basic for readers who are already experienced programmers.
- Appendix B: **Standard VB4 Add-Ins**, is a tutorial on using the VisData, Data Manager, and Data Form Designer programs that are shipped with Visual Basic 4.
- Appendix C: **Answers to Odd-Numbered Review Questions**, contains answers to the review questions located at the end of each chapter. (The even-numbered answers are supplied in the Instructor's manual.)

Chapter Sequence Flowchart. It is often more useful for professors to cover chapters in a different order from the sequence presented in the book. The following sequences of chapters are possible, given built-in dependencies between topics:



* Chapter 8a indicates Crystal Reports, and Chapter 8b indicates Online Help.

Immediately after Chapter 3, you can cover Chapters 5, 8, and 10 without any difficulties. After Chapter 4, Chapters 9 and 11 may be covered. After Chapters 4 and 5, Chapters 6 and 7 may be covered. One alternate approach, for example, is to begin databases before object-oriented programming, so the sequence would be 1-3, 5, 4, 5-6, 8-11. Another approach would be to emphasize ActiveX controls earlier in the course, so the sequence would be 1-3, 4, 11, 5-7, 8, 9, 10.

Supplemental Materials and Teaching Aids

The following learning aids are furnished with each copy of the book:

- Review Questions at the end of each chapter.
- Answers to the odd-numbered review questions in Appendix C.
- A disk containing all sample programs.

- Access to the following author and publisher Web sites where additional sample programs are available:

<http://www.pobox.com/~irvinek/vbook>

<http://www.scottjonespub.com>

The following teaching aids are furnished to the instructor in the instructor's guide:

- A printed test bank of short-answer, multiple-choice and True/False questions, with two sets of 40 questions per chapter.
- Additional programming exercises designed to enhance the use of this book.
- Answers to all even-numbered review questions in the book.
- A disk containing the test bank questions for each chapter.
- A disk containing solution programs for all programming exercises in the book. Updated solutions and additional programming exercises will be posted on the author and publisher web sites listed earlier. (Files exclusively for instructor use will be encrypted with password-protection.)

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Table of Contents

1	Designing and Coding Programs	1
1.1	Application Development Cycle	2
1.1.1	Interviewing Management and Users	2
1.1.2	Creating Program Specifications	2
1.1.3	Performing a Feasibility Review	2
1.1.4	Designing the Application	3
1.1.5	Design Goals	4
1.1.6	Implementing the Application	5
1.1.7	Testing the Application	5
1.2	Sample Design: Mozart Music Sales	6
1.2.1	Program Specifications	6
1.2.2	Program Design	7
1.3	User Interface Design	10
1.3.1	Avoiding Crowding Forms	10
1.3.2	Setting the Tab Order	11
1.3.3	Keyboard Input	12
1.3.4	Using Standard Menus	13
1.4	Coding Guidelines	13
1.4.1	Declaring Variables and Constants	13
1.4.2	Naming Variables and Constants	14
1.4.3	Naming Controls	15
1.4.4	Naming Procedures and Methods	16
1.4.5	Indenting Code	17
1.4.6	Predefined VB Constants	17
1.4.7	Line Continuation	18
1.4.8	App Object Properties	18
1.5	Error Handling	20
1.5.1	Causes of Errors	20
1.5.2	On Error GoTo Statement	20
1.5.3	Resume Statement	21
1.5.4	Using the Err Object	23

1.6	Reducing Code Size	24
1.7	Improving Execution Speed	25
1.7.1	Code Optimization	25
1.7.2	Display Optimization	26
1.7.3	Perceived Speed Optimization	26
1.8	Review Questions	27
1.9	Chapter Exercises	29
2	Building an Invoice Application	33
2.1	Mozart Music Sales - 1	33
2.1.1	Objectives	34
2.1.2	Program Specifications	34
2.1.3	Program Design	34
2.1.4	Program Implementation	36
2.2	Mozart Music Sales - 2	39
2.2.1	Program Specifications	40
2.2.2	Program Design	40
2.2.3	Program Implementation	42
2.3	Mozart Music Sales - 3	45
2.3.1	Program Specifications	46
2.3.2	Program Design	46
2.3.3	Program Implementation	47
2.4	Common Dialog Control	52
2.4.1	ShowOpen, ShowSave Methods	52
2.4.2	Example: Selecting and Opening a File	53
2.4.3	ShowColor Method	55
2.4.4	ShowFont Method	56
2.5	Saving and Retrieving Program Settings	57
2.5.1	Viewing the System Registry	57
2.5.2	Visual Basic Procedures	60
2.5.3	SaveSetting Procedure	60
2.5.4	GetSetting Function	60
2.5.5	Example Program: Save/Retrieve Data Path	61
2.5.6	GetAllSettings Function	62
2.6	Review Questions	63
2.7	Chapter Exercises	65

3	Chapter 3: Arrays and Collections	71
3.1	Object Variables	71
3.1.1	Declaring and Assigning Objects	71
3.1.2	Declaring and Assigning Object Arrays	73
3.1.3	Creating a Control Array in Design Mode	74
3.1.4	Creating a Control Array at Runtime	75
3.2	The MixUp Game	76
3.2.1	Program Specifications	76
3.2.2	Program Design	77
3.2.3	Program Implementation	77
3.3	Using Visual Basic Collections	82
3.3.1	Built-In Collections	82
3.3.2	Programmer-Defined Collections	83
3.3.3	Collection Methods and Properties	84
3.3.4	Example: Resizing Controls on a Form	86
3.4	The Glossary Program	88
3.4.1	Program Design	88
3.4.2	Program Implementation	89
3.5	Random-Access Files	92
3.5.1	Opening a File	92
3.5.2	Writing Records	93
3.5.3	Reading Records	93
3.5.4	Example: Customer Accounts Program	94
3.5.5	Program Design	94
3.5.6	Program Implementation	96
3.6	Creating MDI Applications	98
3.6.1	MDI Bitmap Viewer Program	99
3.6.2	Program Design	100
3.6.3	Program Implementation	101
3.7	Review Questions	104
3.8	Chapter Exercises	106
4	Object-Oriented Programming	117
4.1	Classes and Objects	117
4.1.1	Object-Oriented Design	118
4.1.2	Class Modules	120
4.1.3	Creating Instances of a Class	122
4.1.4	Properties	123
4.1.5	Event Handlers	125
4.1.6	Methods	126

4.1.7	New and Set Statements	126
4.2	Student Class Example	127
4.2.1	Program Design	127
4.2.2	Program Implementation	128
4.3	Student Collection Class	130
4.3.1	Program Design	130
4.3.2	The Main Form	131
4.3.3	The clsStudent Class	133
4.3.4	The clsStudentCollection Class	134
4.4	Doctors Office Scheduling Program	136
4.4.1	Program Specifications	136
4.4.2	Program Design	137
4.4.3	Program Implementation	141
4.4.4	The clsPatient Class	142
4.4.5	The clsApptCalendar Class	144
4.4.6	The clsAppointment Class	146
4.4.7	The frmInput Form	149
4.5	Review Questions	152
4.6	Chapter Exercises	155
5	Introducing Databases	165
5.1	Tables and Databases	166
5.1.1	Introduction	166
5.1.2	Defining Tables	166
5.1.3	Recordset Objects	167
5.1.4	Field Types in Databases	168
5.1.5	Using Data Controls	169
5.1.6	Using Data-Bound Controls	170
5.2	Using Microsoft Access	172
5.2.1	Creating a Database	172
5.2.2	Creating the SalesStaff Table	173
5.2.3	Creating Indexes	174
5.2.4	Entering Table Data	175
5.3	Viewing the SalesStaff Table	175
5.3.1	The Database Table	176
5.3.2	Display the Table	176
5.3.3	Adding New Records	177
5.3.4	Changing the Record Order	179
5.4	Moving the Recordset Pointer	181
5.4.1	Example: SalesStaff Table	182
5.5	Data-Bound List, Combo, and Grid	183

5.5.1	Data-Bound List Control	183
5.5.2	Data-Bound Combo Control	186
5.5.3	Data-Bound Grid Control	188
5.6	Mozart Music Sales - 4	190
5.6.1	Program Specifications	190
5.6.2	Program Design	190
5.6.3	Program Implementation	191
5.7	Mail-Order Computer Sales	193
5.7.1	Program Specifications	193
5.7.2	Program Design	194
5.7.3	The Computer Database	195
5.7.4	Program Implementation	196
5.8	Searching for Records (SalesStaff 3)	199
5.8.1	Table Seek Method	200
5.8.2	Using an SQL Search	202
5.8.3	Example: A Simple Query Program	203
5.8.4	FindFirst, FindNext, and Other Search Methods	205
5.9	Review Questions	206
5.10	Chapter Exercises	208
6	Data Access Objects	221
6.1	Using the Data Access Object Library	221
6.1.1	Workspaces	222
6.1.2	OpenRecordset Method	222
6.1.3	TableDefs Property	223
6.2	Project: Personal Contact Manager - 1	225
6.2.1	Program Specifications	225
6.2.2	Program Design	226
6.2.3	Implementation: module1	230
6.2.4	Implementation: frmMain	233
6.2.5	Implementation: frmSplash	234
6.2.6	Implementation: frmEdit	235
6.2.7	Conclusion	235
6.3	Project: Personal Contact Manager - 2	236
6.3.1	Program Specifications	236
6.3.2	Program Design	236
6.3.3	Program Implementation	237
6.4	Project: Doctors Office Appointments - 2	241
6.4.1	Program Specifications	241
6.4.2	Program Design	242
6.4.3	Implementing the Appointment Program	244

6.4.4	The Main Form: frmMain	244
6.4.5	Implementing the clsAppointment Class	245
6.4.6	The clsApptCalendar Class	247
6.4.7	Implementing the clsPatient Class	250
6.4.8	The frmDisplay and frmInput Windows	252
6.4.9	Conclusion	253
6.5	Multiuser Database Processing	253
6.5.1	Example: Record-Locking Program	254
6.5.2	Program Implementation	256
6.5.3	BeginTrans, CommitTrans, and Rollback	258
6.6	Review Questions	259
6.7	Chapter Exercises	263
7	Relational Databases	271
7.1	Database Design	272
7.1.1	Terminology	272
7.1.2	Designing a Database	273
7.2	Using the SQL Language	274
7.2.1	Structure of an SQL Statement	274
7.2.2	A Sample Database	275
7.2.3	SELECT Statement	276
7.2.4	WHERE Clause	277
7.2.5	Selecting from Multiple Tables	280
7.2.6	JOIN Clause	281
7.2.7	Creating Queries in Microsoft Access	284
7.3	SQL Action Queries	285
7.3.1	UPDATE Statement	285
7.3.2	DELETE Statement	286
7.3.3	INSERT INTO Statement (Append Queries)	287
7.4	Creating Tables and Indexes	288
7.4.1	Creating Indexes	288
7.4.2	Creating Tables	288
7.4.3	Removing Tables and Indexes	289
7.5	Application: Stellar Car Rental	290
7.5.1	Overview	290
7.6	Table Descriptions	291
7.6.1	Vehicle Inventory	292
7.6.2	Vehicle Descriptions, Types, and Status	293
7.6.3	Rental Prices	293
7.6.4	Customers, Reservations, and Invoices	294
7.7	Validation Rules	295

7.7.1	Creating Validation Rules in Access	296
7.8	Table Relationships	297
7.8.1	Creating Table Relationships	298
7.9	Designing the Interface	302
7.9.1	Vehicle Reservations	303
7.10	Reservation Implementation	307
7.10.1	Module1	307
7.10.2	The clsVehicleType Class	309
7.10.3	The clsReservation Class	310
7.10.4	The frmReserv Form	317
7.10.5	The frmCustomer Form	319
7.10.6	The frmFindFile Form	320
7.10.7	The frmPrices Form	321
7.11	Review Questions	322
7.12	Chapter Exercises	324
8	Reports and Online Help	329
8.1	Crystal Reports	329
8.1.1	Creating a Columnar Report	330
8.1.2	Dividing a Report Into Groups	335
8.1.3	Adding Selection Criteria	337
8.1.4	Creating a Cross-Tab Summary Report	340
8.1.5	Using the Crystal Reports Custom Control	343
8.1.6	Sample Application: Concert Ticket Reports	345
8.1.7	Program Implementation	347
8.2	Creating Online Help	350
8.2.1	The User Assistance Model	350
8.2.2	StatusBar Control	351
8.2.3	Creating Online Help Files	354
8.2.4	VB/HelpWriter Lite	355
8.2.5	Example: Stellar Car Rental Reservations	355
8.2.6	Adding Help Commands to the Menu	358
8.2.7	Expanding the Help File	359
8.2.8	Adding Jumps	362
8.3	Review Questions	364
8.4	Chapter Exercises	367
9	Object Linking and Embedding (OLE)	369
9.1	OLE Fundamentals	369