
Subject: Re: General info question for newbie
Posted by [Paul van Delst](#) on Mon, 01 Oct 2001 18:03:48 GMT
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Chris wrote:

- >
- > Just a quick question:
- >
- > Having dl'd the IDL 5.4 demo and played around a bit, I wondered how
- > this would help me in a GIS environment and what advantages it would
- > hold over a regular programming language?

Well, that depends on what you want to do. (And, btw, why don't you consider IDL a "regular programming language"?) Also, if no else in your field and/or department/job/whatever is using IDL, it's probably not a good choice - unless you're the type of fellow who will eventually convince a goodly proportion of people you work with that IDL is the ant's pants and they should use it. (I have seen that happen.)

- > The opinion seems to be that
- > there is less coding involved,

In IDL? Less coding? My experience is indifferent in this respect. E.g. in my IDL functions/procedure I have to check the correct dimensionality of the arguments as well as size since there is no type declarations as such in IDL. In F90, for example, I know the input array dimensions are correct (otherwise the code wouldn't compile), I just have to check the sizes.

When it comes to (direct) graphics, there's no question that IDL involves less coding. Can't get much simpler than:

```
IDL> PLOT, x, y
```

Also, a big plus/speedup for me in using IDL is (apart from the graphics) the command line. I can easily test code without having to write a test program.

- > And how hard is it
- > to learn what is essentially a new language?

Not essentially - it IS a new language. With a bunch of neat features and associated idiosyncracies just like any other programming language/environment. I get the distinct impression you think of IDL only a few lines above "toy" on the "Neat Things to do with your Computer" list.

As to learning curve - well, that depends on how keen you are. :o)

paulv

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