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Autotools: A Practioner's Guide to GNU Autoconf, Automake, and Libtool

John Calcote

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The GNU Autotools make it easy for developers to create software that is portable across many Unix-like operating systems. Although the Autotools are used by thousands of open source software packages, they have a notoriously steep learning curve. And good luck to the beginner who wants to find anything beyond a basic reference work online.

Autotools Autotools is the first book to offer programmers a tutorial-based guide to the GNU build system. Author John Calcote begins with an overview of high-level concepts and a quick hands-on tour of the philosophy and design of the Autotools. He then tackles more advanced details, like using the M4 macro processor with Autoconf, extending the framework provided by Automake, and building Java and C# sources. He concludes the book with detailed solutions to the most frequent problems encountered by first-time Autotools users.

You'll learn how to:

- Master the Autotools build system to maximize your software's portability
- Generate Autoconf configuration scripts to simplify the compilation process
- Produce portable makefiles with Automake
- Build cross-platform software libraries with Libtool
- Write your own Autoconf macros

Autotools focuses on two projects: Jupiter, a simple "Hello, world!" program, and FLAIM, an existing, complex open source effort containing four separate but interdependent subprojects. Follow along as the author takes Jupiter's build system from a basic makefile to a full-fledged Autotools project, and then as he converts the FLAIM projects from complex hand-coded makefiles to the powerful and flexible GNU build system.

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