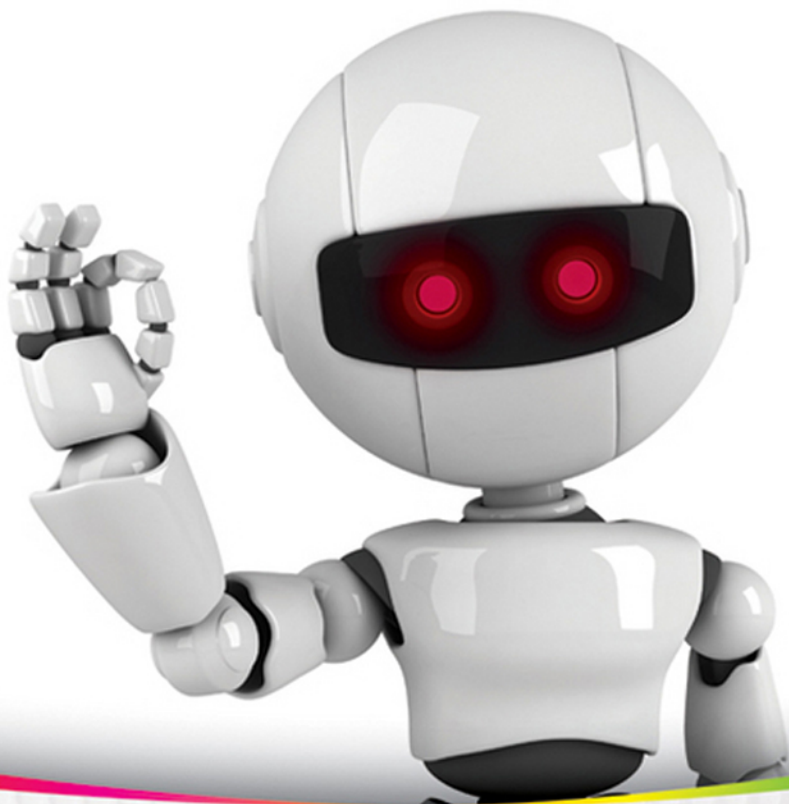


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Wei-Meng Lee



# BEGINNING ANDROID™ 4 APPLICATION DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION.....	xxi
CHAPTER 1    Getting Started with Android Programming .....	1
CHAPTER 2    Activities, Fragments, and Intents. ....	35
CHAPTER 3    Getting to Know the Android User Interface. ....	105
CHAPTER 4    Designing Your User Interface with Views .....	159
CHAPTER 5    Displaying Pictures and Menus with Views. ....	219
CHAPTER 6    Data Persistence .....	251
CHAPTER 7    Content Providers .....	293
CHAPTER 8    Messaging.....	321
CHAPTER 9    Location-Based Services .....	351
CHAPTER 10   Networking .....	393
CHAPTER 11   Developing Android Services .....	429
CHAPTER 12   Publishing Android Applications.....	463
APPENDIX A   Using Eclipse for Android Development .....	483
APPENDIX B   Using the Android Emulator.....	499
APPENDIX C   Answers to Exercises .....	515
INDEX.....	521



**BEGINNING**

# **Android™ 4 Application Development**



BEGINNING

# Android™ 4 Application Development

Wei-Meng Lee



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*To my family:*

*Thanks for the understanding and support  
while I worked on getting this book ready.*

*I love you all!*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**WEI-MENG LEE** is a technologist and founder of Developer Learning Solutions ([www.learn2develop.net](http://www.learn2develop.net)), a technology company specializing in hands-on training on the latest mobile technologies. Wei-Meng has many years of training experience and his training courses place special emphasis on the learning-by-doing approach. This hands-on approach to learning programming makes understanding the subject much easier than reading books, tutorials, and other documentation.

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**WRITING THIS BOOK HAS** been a roller-coaster ride. Working with just-released software is always a huge challenge. When I first started working on this book, the Android 4 SDK had just been released; and wading through the documentation was like finding a needle in a haystack. To add to the challenge, the Android emulator for the tablet is extremely slow and unstable, making the development process very laborious.

Now that the book is done, I hope your journey will not be as eventful as mine. Like any good guide, my duty is to make your foray into Android tablet development an enjoyable and fruitful experience. The book you are now holding is the result of the collaborative efforts of many people, and I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge them here.

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# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

*xxi*

## CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED WITH ANDROID PROGRAMMING

**1**

### What Is Android?

**2**

Android Versions

2

Features of Android

3

Architecture of Android

4

Android Devices in the Market

6

The Android Market

8

The Android Developer Community

9

### Obtaining the Required Tools

**9**

Android SDK

10

Installing the Android SDK Tools

11

Configuring the Android SDK Manager

12

Eclipse

14

Android Development Tools (ADT)

15

Creating Android Virtual Devices (AVDs)

17

### Creating Your First Android Application

**20**

### Anatomy of an Android Application

**29**

### Summary

**33**

## CHAPTER 2: ACTIVITIES, FRAGMENTS, AND INTENTS

**35**

### Understanding Activities

**36**

Applying Styles and Themes to an Activity

41

Hiding the Activity Title

41

Displaying a Dialog Window

42

Displaying a Progress Dialog

47

Displaying a More Sophisticated Progress Dialog

50

### Linking Activities Using Intents

**53**

Resolving Intent Filter Collision

58

Returning Results from an Intent

59

Passing Data Using an Intent Object

63

### Fragments

**69**

Adding Fragments Dynamically

73

Life Cycle of a Fragment

76

Interactions between Fragments

80

<b>Calling Built-In Applications Using Intents</b>	<b>85</b>
Understanding the Intent Object	89
Using Intent Filters	91
Adding Categories	96
<b>Displaying Notifications</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>103</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3: GETTING TO KNOW THE ANDROID USER INTERFACE</b>	 <b>105</b>
 <b>Understanding the Components of a Screen</b>	 <b>105</b>
Views and ViewGroups	106
LinearLayout	107
AbsoluteLayout	115
TableLayout	116
RelativeLayout	117
FrameLayout	118
ScrollView	121
<b>Adapting to Display Orientation</b>	<b>123</b>
Anchoring Views	125
Resizing and Repositioning	127
<b>Managing Changes to Screen Orientation</b>	<b>130</b>
Persisting State Information during Changes in Configuration	133
Detecting Orientation Changes	135
Controlling the Orientation of the Activity	135
<b>Utilizing the Action Bar</b>	<b>136</b>
Adding Action Items to the Action Bar	139
Customizing the Action Items and Application Icon	144
<b>Creating the User Interface Programmatically</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Listening for UI Notifications</b>	<b>148</b>
Overriding Methods Defined in an Activity	149
Registering Events for Views	152
<b>Summary</b>	<b>156</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 4: DESIGNING YOUR USER INTERFACE WITH VIEWS</b>	 <b>159</b>
 <b>Using Basic Views</b>	 <b>160</b>
TextView View	160
Button, ImageButton, EditText, CheckBox, ToggleButton, RadioButton, and RadioGroup Views	161
ProgressBar View	171
AutoCompleteTextView View	177
<b>Using Picker Views</b>	<b>179</b>

---

TimePicker View	179
DatePicker View	184
<b>Using List Views to Display Long Lists</b>	<b>191</b>
ListView View	191
Using the Spinner View	199
<b>Understanding Specialized Fragments</b>	<b>202</b>
Using a ListFragment	202
Using a DialogFragment	207
Using a PreferenceFragment	210
<b>Summary</b>	<b>214</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: DISPLAYING PICTURES AND MENUS WITH VIEWS</b>	<b>219</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Using Image Views to Display Pictures</b>	<b>219</b>
Gallery and ImageView Views	220
ImageSwitcher	226
GridView	231
<b>Using Menus with Views</b>	<b>234</b>
Creating the Helper Methods	235
Options Menu	238
Context Menu	240
<b>Some Additional Views</b>	<b>242</b>
AnalogClock and DigitalClock Views	242
WebView	243
<b>Summary</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: DATA PERSISTENCE</b>	<b>251</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Saving and Loading User Preferences</b>	<b>251</b>
Accessing Preferences Using an Activity	252
Programmatically Retrieving and Modifying the Preferences Values	259
Changing the Default Name of the Preferences File	261
<b>Persisting Data to Files</b>	<b>263</b>
Saving to Internal Storage	263
Saving to External Storage (SD Card)	268
Choosing the Best Storage Option	271
Using Static Resources	272
<b>Creating and Using Databases</b>	<b>273</b>
Creating the DBAdapter Helper Class	273
Using the Database Programmatically	279
Pre-Creating the Database	285
<b>Summary</b>	<b>289</b>

<b>CHAPTER 7: CONTENT PROVIDERS</b>	<b>293</b>
Sharing Data in Android	293
Using a Content Provider	294
Predefined Query String Constants	300
Projections	303
Filtering	304
Sorting	305
Creating Your Own Content Providers	305
Using the Content Provider	314
Summary	319
<b>CHAPTER 8: MESSAGING</b>	<b>321</b>
SMS Messaging	321
Sending SMS Messages Programmatically	322
Getting Feedback after Sending a Message	325
Sending SMS Messages Using Intent	328
Receiving SMS Messages	329
Caveats and Warnings	344
Sending E-mail	345
Summary	347
<b>CHAPTER 9: LOCATION-BASED SERVICES</b>	<b>351</b>
Displaying Maps	352
Creating the Project	352
Obtaining the Maps API Key	353
Displaying the Map	355
Displaying the Zoom Control	358
Changing Views	361
Navigating to a Specific Location	363
Adding Markers	366
Getting the Location That Was Touched	369
Geocoding and Reverse Geocoding	371
Getting Location Data	375
Monitoring a Location	384
Project — Building a Location Tracker	385
Summary	390
<b>CHAPTER 10: NETWORKING</b>	<b>393</b>
Consuming Web Services Using HTTP	393
Downloading Binary Data	396

---

Downloading Text Content	402
Accessing Web Services Using the GET Method	404
Consuming JSON Services	409
Sockets Programming	417
Summary	426
<b>CHAPTER 11: DEVELOPING ANDROID SERVICES</b>	<b>429</b>
<hr/>	
Creating Your Own Services	429
Performing Long-Running Tasks in a Service	433
Performing Repeated Tasks in a Service	439
Executing Asynchronous Tasks on Separate Threads Using IntentService	442
Establishing Communication between a Service and an Activity	445
Binding Activities to Services	449
Understanding Threading	454
Summary	460
<b>CHAPTER 12: PUBLISHING ANDROID APPLICATIONS</b>	<b>463</b>
<hr/>	
Preparing for Publishing	463
Versioning Your Application	464
Digitally Signing Your Android Applications	466
Deploying APK Files	471
Using the adb.exe Tool	471
Using a Web Server	474
Publishing on the Android Market	476
Summary	481
<b>APPENDIX A: USING ECLIPSE FOR ANDROID DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>483</b>
<hr/>	
Getting Around in Eclipse	483
Workspaces	483
Package Explorer	485
Using Projects from Other Workspaces	486
Using Editors within Eclipse	487
Understanding Eclipse Perspectives	490
Automatically Importing Packages	490
Using the Code Completion Feature	491
Refactoring	492
Debugging your Application	494
Setting Breakpoints	495
Dealing with Exceptions	497

<b>APPENDIX B: USING THE ANDROID EMULATOR</b>	<b>499</b>
Uses of the Android Emulator	499
Creating Snapshots	501
SD Card Emulation	502
Emulating Devices with Different Screen Sizes	504
Emulating Physical Capabilities	506
Sending SMS Messages to the Emulator	508
Making Phone Calls	509
Transferring Files into and out of the Emulator	511
Resetting the Emulator	513
<b>APPENDIX C: ANSWERS TO EXERCISES</b>	<b>515</b>
 <b>INDEX</b>	 <b>521</b>

# INTRODUCTION

**I FIRST STARTED PLAYING WITH THE ANDROID SDK** before it was officially released as version 1.0. Back then, the tools were unpolished, the APIs in the SDK were unstable, and the documentation was sparse. Fast-forward three and a half years, Android is now a formidable mobile operating system, with a following no less impressive than the iPhone. Having gone through all the growing pains of Android, I think now is the best time to start learning about Android programming — the APIs have stabilized, and the tools have improved. One challenge remains, however: Getting started is still an elusive goal for many. What's more, Google has recently released their latest version of the Android SDK — 4.0, a unified mobile OS for both smartphones and tablets. The Android 4.0 SDK includes several new features for tablet developers, and understanding all these new features requires some effort on the part of beginners.

It was with this challenge in mind that I was motivated to write this book, one that could benefit beginning Android programmers and enable them to write progressively more sophisticated applications.

As a book written to help jump-start beginning Android developers, it covers the necessary topics in a linear manner so that you can build on your knowledge without being overwhelmed by the details. I adopt the philosophy that the best way to learn is by doing — hence, the numerous Try It Out sections in each chapter, which first show you how to build something and then explain how everything works. I have also taken this opportunity to further improve the previous edition of this book, addressing feedback from readers and adding additional topics that are important to beginning Android developers.

Although Android programming is a huge topic, my aim for this book is threefold: to get you started with the fundamentals, to help you understand the underlying architecture of the SDK, and to appreciate why things are done in certain ways. It is beyond the scope of any book to cover everything under the sun related to Android programming, but I am confident that after reading this book (and doing the exercises), you will be well equipped to tackle your next Android programming challenge.

## WHO THIS BOOK IS FOR

This book is targeted for the beginning Android developer who wants to start developing applications using Google's Android SDK. To truly benefit from this book, you should have some background in programming and at least be familiar with object-oriented programming concepts. If you are totally new to Java — the language used for Android development — you might want to take a programming course in Java programming first, or grab one of many good books on Java programming. In my experience, if you already know C# or VB.NET, learning Java is not too much of an effort; you should be comfortable just following along with the Try It Outs.

For those totally new to programming, I know the lure of developing mobile apps and making some money is tempting. However, before attempting to try out the examples in this book, I think a better starting point would be to learn the basics of programming first.



**NOTE** *All the examples discussed in this book were written and tested using version 4.0 of the Android SDK. While every effort is made to ensure that all the tools used in this book are the latest, it is always possible that by the time you read this book, a newer version of the tools may be available. If so, some of the instructions and/or screenshots may differ slightly. However, any variations should be manageable.*

## WHAT THIS BOOK COVERS

This book covers the fundamentals of Android programming using the Android SDK. It is divided into 12 chapters and three appendixes.

**Chapter 1: Getting Started with Android Programming** covers the basics of the Android OS and its current state. You will learn about the features of Android devices, as well as some of the popular devices on the market. You will also learn how to download and install all the required tools to develop Android applications and then test them on the Android emulator.

**Chapter 2: Activities, Fragments, and Intents** gets you acquainted with these three fundamental concepts in Android programming. Activities and fragments are the building blocks of an Android application. You will learn how to link activities together to form a complete Android application using intents, one of the unique characteristics of the Android OS.

**Chapter 3: Getting to Know the Android User Interface** covers the various components that make up the UI of an Android application. You will learn about the various layouts you can use to build the UI of your application, and the numerous events that are associated with the UI when users interact with the application.

**Chapter 4: Designing Your User Interface with Views** walks you through the various basic views you can use to build your Android UI. You will learn three main groups of views: basic views, picker views, and list views. You will also learn about the specialized fragments available in Android 3.0 and 4.0.

**Chapter 5: Displaying Pictures and Menus with Views** continues the exploration of views. Here, you will learn how to display images using the various image views, as well as display options and context menus in your application. This chapter ends with some additional cool views that you can use to spice up your application.

**Chapter 6: Data Persistence** shows you how to save, or store, data in your Android application. In addition to learning the various techniques to store user data, you will also learn file manipulation and how to save files onto internal and external storage (SD card). In addition, you will learn how to create and use a SQLite database in your Android application.



**Chapter 7: Content Providers** discusses how data can be shared among different applications on an Android device. You will learn how to use a content provider and then build one yourself.

**Chapter 8: Messaging** explores two of the most interesting topics in mobile programming — sending SMS messages and e-mail. You will learn how to programmatically send and receive SMS and e-mail messages, and how to intercept incoming SMS messages so that the built-in Messaging application will not be able to receive any messages.

**Chapter 9: Location-Based Services** demonstrates how to build a location-based service application using Google Maps. You will also learn how to obtain geographical location data and then display the location on the map.

**Chapter 10: Networking** explores how to connect to web servers to download data. You will see how XML and JSON web services can be consumed in an Android application. This chapter also explains sockets programming, and you will learn how to build a chat client in Android.

**Chapter 11: Developing Android Services** demonstrates how you can write applications using services. Services are background applications that run without a UI. You will learn how to run your services asynchronously on a separate thread, and how your activities can communicate with them.

**Chapter 12: Publishing Android Applications** discusses the various ways you can publish your Android applications when you are ready. You will also learn about the necessary steps to publishing and selling your applications on the Android Market.

**Appendix A: Using Eclipse for Android Development** provides a brief overview of the many features in Eclipse.

**Appendix B: Using the Android Emulator** provides some tips and tricks on using the Android emulator for testing your applications.

**Appendix C: Answers to Exercises** contains the solutions to the end-of-chapter exercises found in every chapter.

## HOW THIS BOOK IS STRUCTURED

This book breaks down the task of learning Android programming into several smaller chunks, enabling you to digest each topic before delving into a more advanced one.

If you are a total beginner to Android programming, start with Chapter 1 first. Once you have familiarized yourself with the basics, head over to the appendixes to read more about Eclipse and the Android emulator. When you are ready, continue with Chapter 2 and gradually move into more advanced topics.

A feature of this book is that all the code samples in each chapter are independent of those discussed in previous chapters. This gives you the flexibility to dive into the topics that interest you and start working on the Try It Out projects.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO USE THIS BOOK

All the examples in this book run on the Android emulator (which is included as part of the Android SDK). However, to get the most out of this book, having a real Android device would be useful (though not absolutely necessary).

## CONVENTIONS

To help you get the most from the text and keep track of what's happening, a number of conventions are used throughout the book.

### TRY IT OUT These Are Exercises or Examples for You to Follow

The Try It Out sections appear once or more per chapter. These are exercises to work through as you follow the related discussion in the text.

1. They consist of a set of numbered steps.
2. Follow the steps with your copy of the project files.

### *How It Works*

After each Try It Out, the code you've typed is explained in detail.

As for other conventions in the text:

- New terms and important words are *highlighted* in italics when first introduced.
- Keyboard combinations are treated like this: Ctrl+R.
- Filenames, URLs, and code within the text are treated like so: `persistence.properties`.
- Code is presented in two different ways:

We use a monofont type with no highlighting for most code examples.

We use **bolding** to emphasize code that is of particular importance in the present context.



**NOTE** Notes, tips, hints, tricks, and asides to the current discussion look like this.

## SOURCE CODE

As you work through the examples in this book, you may choose either to type in all the code manually or to use the source code files that accompany the book. All the source code used in this book is available for download at [www.wrox.com](http://www.wrox.com). When at the site, simply locate the book's title (use the Search box or one of the title lists) and click the Download Code link on the book's detail page to obtain all the source code for the book.

You'll find the filename of the project you need in a CodeNote such as this at the beginning of the Try it Out features:

*code snippet filename*

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# 1

## Getting Started with Android Programming

### WHAT YOU WILL LEARN IN THIS CHAPTER

---

- What is Android?
- Android versions and its feature set
- The Android architecture
- The various Android devices on the market
- The Android Market application store
- How to obtain the tools and SDK for developing Android applications
- How to develop your first Android application

Welcome to the world of Android! When I was writing my first book on Android (which was just less than a year ago), I stated that Android was ranked second in the U.S. smartphone market, second to Research In Motion's (RIM) BlackBerry, and overtaking Apple's iPhone. Shortly after the book went to press, comScore (a global leader in measuring the digital world and the preferred source of digital marketing intelligence) reported that Android has overtaken BlackBerry as the most popular smartphone platform in the U.S.

A few months later, Google released Android 3.0, code named *Honeycomb*. With Android 3.0, Google's focus in the new Software Development Kit was the introduction of several new features

designed for widescreen devices, specifically tablets. If you are writing apps for Android smartphones, Android 3.0 is not really useful, as the new features are not supported on smartphones. At the same time that Android 3.0 was released, Google began working on the next version of Android, which can be used on both smartphones and tablets. In October 2011, Google released Android 4.0, code named *Ice Cream Sandwich*, and that is the focus of this book.

In this chapter you will learn what Android is, and what makes it so compelling to both developers and device manufacturers alike. You will also get started with developing your first Android application, and learn how to obtain all the necessary tools and set them up so that you can test your application on an Android 4.0 emulator. By the end of this chapter, you will be equipped with the basic knowledge you need to explore more sophisticated techniques and tricks for developing your next killer Android application.

## WHAT IS ANDROID?

Android is a mobile operating system that is based on a modified version of Linux. It was originally developed by a startup of the same name, Android, Inc. In 2005, as part of its strategy to enter the mobile space, Google purchased Android and took over its development work (as well as its development team).

Google wanted Android to be open and free; hence, most of the Android code was released under the open source Apache License, which means that anyone who wants to use Android can do so by downloading the full Android source code. Moreover, vendors (typically hardware manufacturers) can add their own proprietary extensions to Android and customize Android to differentiate their products from others. This simple development model makes Android very attractive and has thus piqued the interest of many vendors. This has been especially true for companies affected by the phenomenon of Apple's iPhone, a hugely successful product that revolutionized the smartphone industry. Such companies include Motorola and Sony Ericsson, which for many years have been developing their own mobile operating systems. When the iPhone was launched, many of these manufacturers had to scramble to find new ways of revitalizing their products. These manufacturers see Android as a solution — they will continue to design their own hardware and use Android as the operating system that powers it.

The main advantage of adopting Android is that it offers a unified approach to application development. Developers need only develop for Android, and their applications should be able to run on numerous different devices, as long as the devices are powered using Android. In the world of smartphones, applications are the most important part of the success chain. Device manufacturers therefore see Android as their best hope to challenge the onslaught of the iPhone, which already commands a large base of applications.

## Android Versions

Android has gone through quite a number of updates since its first release. Table 1-1 shows the various versions of Android and their codenames.